

# THE WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC  
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## Sam Rivers Steinski's Jukebox

Christof Migone  
Marc Almond  
Rocket From The Tombs  
Thomas Brinkmann  
John Zorn  
Bohman Brothers  
Oslo's new Improv set  
Thomas Buckner  
Musée Mécanique  
Cex

# SONIC YOUTH

12 page special

Interview and record reviews from *Daydream Nation* to *All Tomorrow's Parties*

www.thewire.co.uk



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Svenn Nævd (A-m Berlin) photographed by Stefanie Giesemann

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# Letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, email [letters@thewire.co.uk](mailto:letters@thewire.co.uk)

Letters should include a full name and address



Three cool rock chicks listening to Reel? Le Tigre

## Mad for it

I've been a regular reader of *The Wire* since issue 17. I know you have declared the Radiohead correspondence closed, and rightly so. However, I am reminded of *The Wire* 88 (June 1993) and Richard Cook's editorial which offered justification for putting Michael Jackson on the cover... hard to believe people are still getting into a lather ten years later over cover stars. I would have thought your stance would be pretty evident by now.

I enjoyed Ben Watson's Tangents article on Music's Lunatic Fringe (*The Wire* 216), even as a 'psychic oppressor'. Being a mental health nurse, it's good to see the Whittington psychiatric services getting a bit of (rare) praise from the punters, even though Hugh Metcalfe's recollections date back 15 years. Just a quick gripe, however: hasn't Veryan Weston got his own wires crossed a bit when he refers to 'the Tavistock Institute reward/punishment theory'? The Tavistock Clinic is the ne plus ultra of psychoanalytic theory and practice, and would, I'm sure, be deeply miffed at even sharing the same sentence with behaviourism'.

Trevor Barre London, UK

## Chinese whisper

I am a Chinese woman, and I am also a musician and recording artist who is fascinated by Gary Lucas's work. His guitar has an intimate and very sensitive tone surrounding the vocals. He focuses on each note with the precision of someone who not only operates in the moment, but who also understands a nostalgic 'Oriental' concept of music.

Concerning Huie Hsu's review in *The Wire* 216, I feel

his objection to Gary's use of the term 'Oriental' in his liner notes was definitely overblown, as was his assertion that Gary's 'relationship to Chinese women' was somehow non-PC. However, I'm happy to see that we do both agree that *The Edge Of Heaven* is a great record!

Min Xiao Fen New York, USA

## Contre le sexism

Le Tigre on the cover (*The Wire* 215)! How great! Here I am already feeling optimistic for 2002. As my first year's subscription winds down, I give many thanks as your magazine continues to inform and intrigue whilst and how I hear. These efforts that make up *The Wire* are very much appreciated and enjoyed.

Ticia Downie Edmonton, Canada

## Rooting for dub

I am very sad and disappointed that Dub Syndicate's 'Acres Of Space' album is not on the list of the best dub and roots records of the year 2001 in *The Wire* 215. The records on the list are great, except the 'Now Thing' compilation – in my opinion a very bad and terrible record – but please, do not forget most of them are just compilations and from the glorious past of sweet reggae music, not from the present. Nowadays, when in reggae (almost) everything is dancehall, I think that what Style Scott and company do is really unique and respectable. And where is the respect to Dub Syndicate? Sorry, nowhere, I know it is just a personal and subjective thing, but it pains me.

Tibor Vizler Hungary

## The name game

I read with great interest Mike Barnes's article on UK group Sand (*The Wire* 215). Then I got that titillate whilst of mental dissonance when I recalled an identically named German outfit circa 74, whose *Golem* album was and is a much-loved Krautrock artefact. Call me a nitpicker, but even if a group is no longer operative and its name is theoretically up for grabs, shouldn't we expect of newer artists a bit more effort or research in selecting their monikers? The prior Sand is hardly obscure, as United Dances reissued the album along with additional material as a two CD set in 1996. (Seems that David Tibet and Steven Stapleton were as smitten by Sand as the rest of us.) It all smacks of laziness on the newcomer's part. On well, I understand that *The Beatles* is available these days as well... Fred Mills Wadesboro, USA

## Arcane fact

Regarding the *Flusslichte* CD by Tiefchens/Myers reviewed in *The Wire* 213 by Chris Sharp, please know that David Lee Myers is Arcane Device (not 'worked with' – it's a one-man project) and that this is their third split CD, the previous two being DBL/FDBK and *Speselsetzung*. Yes, it was a matter of time for this collaboration, but the time already came long ago.

Massimo Ricci Rome, Italy

## Rap on the knuckles

Here's a plea from a longterm reader: I'm wondering why you continue with the Outer Limits page of reviews



## Letters

when the entire Soundcheck section has turned into one long Outer Limits column. When was the last time you devoted a full page review, or even a long Soundcheck review, to a HipHop or breakbeat or dub album (and I don't mean Rhythm & Sound, who are cool, but Germanic Industrial types by any other name)? Instead, you now seem to think that only the most esoteric, obscure, impenetrable, "of interest to the musician and his dog only" experimental music is worthy of promotion to full-blown review status. I can't be the only reader who was blown away by that latter Def Jux story (*The Wire* 208), and ever since has been left drooling for more. But since then, what? Nothing, or not much.

The main reason I started reading *The Wire* was because you wrote about HipHop, drum 'n' bass, Techno, etc better (MILES better) than just about anyone else I can think of. So what's changed? The music (especially HipHop) is still out there and still sounding eight years ahead of anything else being produced right now (that's what *The Wire*'s supposed to be about, right?) and you still have some of the best writers on HipHop anywhere. Isn't it about time you let Hua Hsu, Peter Shapiro, Dave 'What planet is he on?' I don't know, but I wouldn't mind living there' Tompkins, Kode9 'what planet has he moved to?' Esthn loose, to fly freestyle ALL OVER THE map, not just hidden away in the back pages? If you don't, then this is one reader who might just have reached his (outer) limit with your review policy.

Tim Bainbridge via email

### Seeing red

As soon as I see in *The Wire* the obscure Marxist reference and the anti-capitalist slant, I am most certain I am reading a Ben Watson article. Please put this anachronistic fossil out to pasture along with his ideology. In fact, I'd be willing to help pay him off – in true free-market fashion – to get him to go away. Thank you.

Jim Hanigan New York, USA

### Daydream nation

First of all, congratulations on this fine publication's independent status. This no doubt benefits everyone involved, contributors and readers alike. Total independence and autonomy really appear to be the only way a publication such as yours can ensure a future free from the glut of commercial escapism that

is swallowing much of the music press both here in the US and abroad. Having the determination to go independent is a sign of your dedication and belief in the ability for music and the related arts of true individual character to survive (and flourish) even in the current international social/political climate.

I can honestly say that, more than any time I have been witness to (yes, even the Reagan years), America is in desperate need of art of genuine value, expression, intellect and challenging individual voice. Without it, the rest of us who haven't given Bush the media-advertised '90 per cent approval rating' would be lost in a drone of pop-con-celebrity benefit concerts and a propaganda machine that is bent on dividing this country into a black and white dystopia of true patriots and terrorist sympathisers.

This publication has been one of the misses from the world of critical thought and values beyond the commercial agenda in the past few months. Sharing company with such events as Sigur Ros live (they toured in the midst of it all in September/October) and David Lynch's profound *Mulholland Drive*, *The Wire* has been a resource into a world that is a true alternative to the moronic, sad, infuriating and tragic psychic and social state this nation is currently absorbed in. So, thank you. Keep up the exceptional work. We need it more than ever.

Jefferson W Petrey Seattle, USA

I feel a few words are in order in defence of Ben Watson, who has come under criticism on recent occasions in the Letters page, most notably from David Bevan (*The Wire* 214) and Jeff Capshaw (216). Both these letters refused to accept any vaguely anti-American sentiment. At a time when many of the contributors to the magazine were 'playing safe' with ultra-PC statements about 11 September, Watson's Pros & Cons proved to be some of the most refreshing reading. While most of the world seems to be falling over itself to offer fawning sycophancy to Bush and friends, we need writers like Ben Watson with the courage to continue to critique and scrutinise America, a country with, arguably, a global stranglehold. Why on earth should he have to justify himself – should any traces of genuine, impassioned political comment be airbrushed out simply to satisfy the few disgruntled American readers?

To his discredit, though (on a different note), was the recent Marx Note at London's Victoria & Albert Museum (organised by Watson), seemingly an organisational shambles unworthy of Schwitters's great name – or

was it all a deliberate ironic statement? I'm sure it wasn't Watson's fault directly, but subtle acoustic improvisation and poetry hardly seem suited to the crowded arena of the V&A. With regards to the audience, it's a shame that they couldn't even begin to appreciate for the likes of Bob Cobbing and Simon Fell. **Jonathon Jones** via email

### Stokes city

This might be a few issues (or a little more) old [a whole year back, in fact – Ed], but in the review of Neil Hargrave's self-titled solo album (*The Wire* 206) I believe the reviewer stated Neil covered Frank Stokes's "Chicken You Can Roast Behind The Moon". In fact, the two songs are completely different and (perhaps by homage?) just share a title. However Royal Trux, I believe, covered Frank Stokes's "Mr Crump Don't Like It". Although I do have to admit I haven't heard Stokes's version of "Mr Crump" so I can't be sure. Hopefully some Stokes covers will come out of their apparent fandom; "Taint Nobody's Business" is crying out for a cover.

**Andrew Jones** via email

### Rock harder

If we are going to see groups like Radiohead and Mercury Rev on the cover of the premier experimental music magazine in the world, why not give some space to the folks truly altering "rock" music. Presocratics or Volcano The Bear or the Saz Handie axis are all intelligently pushing the idiom until breaking point. The second Presocratics release for Table of the Elements, Presocratics Serve Imperialism, did not even get a review. I want more.

**M Barber** Atlanta, USA

### Corrections

**Issue 216** The contact info for Masayoshi Urabe's *Uliklang* CD on Tiliqua, reviewed in Soundcheck, was not included in the Directory. They can be reached at [tilqua@pobox.com](mailto:tilqua@pobox.com) or [tilqua@beigacom.net](mailto:tilqua@beigacom.net). T/F DD 32 32613974 or 00 32 32187921.

**Issue 214** In Avant Rock, Harkonen's *Grizz* album on Hydra Head Industries was wrongly billed as Harkonen by Grizz. In the Directory, Without Fear Recordings' old Web address was mistakenly printed. The current one can be found at [www.purpleman.com](http://www.purpleman.com). □

**The Wire** 218: on sale from 21 March

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# Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.  
Compiled by The Trawler

Most definitely English music: Hugh Davies

The latest issue of MIT Press's *Leonardo Music Journal* is devoted to experimental English music. Submitted *Not Necessarily 'English Music'*, the collection of essays features contributions from Nicolas Collins, Michael Parsons, Alvin Lucier, Eddie Prevost, Hugh Davies, Robin Rimbaud, Janek Schaefer, Joe Banks and David Toop on a wide range of subjects from the Scratch Orchestra to contemporary sound art. To accompany the journal, David Toop has compiled a CD package of English experimental music from the 1960s, also titled *Not Necessarily 'English Music'*, and featuring Cornelius Cardew, Caprice Oram, Hugh Davies, Michael Nyman, Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Michael Parsons, Miss Eastley, AMM, The Scratch Orchestra, Intermodulation, The People Band and Gentle Fire. Released by EMF Media, the CD is available both with the journal (from [mitpress.mit.edu/LMJU](http://mitpress.mit.edu/LMJU)) or as a stand alone release >> The judging of the 36th annual **Prix Ars Electronica**, Europe's premier competition for the electronic arts, takes place in April in Linz, Austria. A total of EUR 100,000 in prize money will be awarded across the categories of computer animation, interactive art, Web design and digital music. The deadline for submitting entries to the music competition, which was won last year by Ryuji Ikeda, is 31 March. More information is available online at [pixars.or.at](http://pixars.or.at) >> If you're dying to know the reason **Royal Trux** broke up, run, don't walk, to your nearest indie emporium and pick up a copy of *The Adventures Of Royal Trux #20*, a new comic book published by Drag City with words by **Neil Michael Hagerty** and art by Deneen Kirchner. In true Marvel style, the book lays out the sordid tale behind the group's dissolution, with some intermissions along the way from Hero/Zero and Victory Chimp >> Or if you've really got money to burn,

why not shell out EUR 350 on *News About Music And Art Number 1*, a very limited edition monograph featuring Jim O'Rourke's photos of Japanese women getting their bags caught in the doors of subway trains in Tokyo? The book is published by Sweden's Neon Gallery Brosarp ([www.neongallery.nu](http://www.neongallery.nu)) >> And even more underground press collector's items: The third edition of the *Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal* is out now. Dedicated to, ahem, cumflings, the zine features purple prose from Byron Coley, Thurston Moore, Richard Meltzer, Richard Hell, Eileen Myles, Lynne Savitt, John Sinclair, Tuli Kupferberg, Mike Watt and Clem Coghill. >> The **Contemporary Music Network**'s new UK touring season kicks off in May with Turntable Hell, a self-explanatory package of some of the world's most diabolical deck hands curated by Canada's Martin Tétreault. Subsequent tours in the season, which is once again supported by The Wire, include BEAST's electroacoustic realisation of Morton Feldman's collaboration with Samuel Beckett, Words And Music, Steve Beresford directing The Dedication Orchestra, and a collaboration between Spring Heel Jack and The Matthew Shipp Quartet. More info at [www.cmtroupe.org.uk](http://www.cmtroupe.org.uk) >> Stirling will once again stake a claim on Scotland's cultural landscape with **Le Weekend**, a festival curated by Wire contributor David Keenan. The event takes place between 25-28 April and the programme is split equally between New York free jazz and Tokyo psychedelia, including David S Ware, William Parker, Shizuka, Maher Shalal Hash Baz and Kei Hano (solo and with Fushitsusha). For more info go to [www.stirling.gov.uk/tobooth](http://www.stirling.gov.uk/tobooth) >> Between 11 April-28 July, San Francisco MoMA presents **Sampling/Christies Mercley**, an exhibition devoted to the New York turntable artist. The show will feature the Tape Fall installation, which aims to transform sound

into a visible presence, a newly commissioned DVD piece entitled Video Quartet, and a screening of *Up And Out*, a synchronisation of the visuals from Antonioni's *BwB Up* with the soundtrack and dialogue of Brian DePalma's *BwB Out* >> **Meta Music Network**, a partnership between Generator, the Arts Council of England, the Musicians Union and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, was launched on 11 February. The Website ([www.metamusic.org.uk](http://www.metamusic.org.uk)) aims to be a one-stop resource for musicians and independent music organisations by providing information on funding, health and safety issues, tips for promoters, copyright information and minutes of industry conferences >> The ever expanding All Tomorrow's Parties festival empire has just announced a Japanese installment of the all-singing, all-dancing, all-cardigan-wearing indie bi-be-in, curated by **Autecrite**. It will take place in late September in Tokyo >> The revival of interest in British folk music continues apace with Topic's May release of a four CD box set, **The Acoustic Folk Box**. The collection moves roughly chronologically from Lonnie Donegan's 'Jack O'Leramids' to Eliza Carthy's '10,000 Miles', taking in Shirley Collins, The Incredible String Band, June Tabor and Richard Thompson along the way >> America's National Public Radio's Lost & Found Sound is organising **The Sonic Memorial Project: The Life And History Of The World Trade Centre And Its Neighbourhood**, a collection of audio artefacts that will be made into a series of radio specials, exhibits and on-site memorials. Anyone with personal memories, vocal memos, private recordings, corporate videos, etc interested in contributing to the project should contact NPR's Sonic Memorial Hotline (001 202 408 0300) or email [info@sonicmemorial.org](mailto:info@sonicmemorial.org). □

Send Bitstream items to [trawler@thewire.co.uk](mailto:trawler@thewire.co.uk)

## Death Row

How would Alec Empire spend his last day on Earth?

You are allowed...

### Three records

Alec Empire: *Intelligence & Sacrifice*

Merzbow: *Ikebukuro Odes*

Sun Ra: *Metea Dreams*

### One film

Logan's Run

### One book

The Bible

### Three visitors

The three Ases of Evil

### Last meal

Green salad and red meat from Texas USA – rare, not medium. Fresh mango and papaya as dessert...

Living monkey brain Chinese style – but the risk of me not liking it is too big perhaps...

### Final message for the world

I came into this world to fight God. And I loved every minute of it – I reached enlightenment through noise, so I'm not scared, because what awaits me on the other side is greater than everything that earth was able to offer. I'll see you in the next round...

### Music for the funeral

Nic Endo: "Les Sacrifices"

Henn Eises: "The Fight Goes On"

Alec Empire: "Parallel Universe"

*Intelligence And Sacrifice* is released in April on CDR



PHOTO: GENEVIEVE KIM / RHF



Ryan Kidwell can pinpoint the moment when he stopped being Cex the burgeoning IDM prodigy and became Cex the self-proclaimed "#1 entertainer" cut enfant terrible of the American electronic underground. It was April 2000 and Kidwell's skittering, melodic tracks had won the then 19 year old an oddball gig opening for a dodgy rock group at a posh hotel bar high above his hometown of Baltimore, Maryland.

"I sat behind my laptop and played these songs that I really liked and really worked hard on," he recalls. "And I was just sitting there, watching my friends and watching these people I didn't know watch me. And I thought, 'This is not me at all.' I really wanted to own the music more than just sitting here and being the guy who made it. After that show I promised myself I was never going to play a show like that again. I didn't care if I just put the music on 'play' and ran around, I was going to do that. And so I did."

True to his word, at his next show (at New York's Knitting Factory), he leapt up from behind his laptop and made a spectacle of himself, racing around the stage, dancing, launching impromptu spits and leading call and response chants. Although recent releases such as the *Starship Galactica* EP (on the 555 label) and *Ops, I Did It Again* (on Kid606's Tigerbeats) still feature plenty of the tuneful electronic bops spangled with acoustic guitar that made his early reputation, Cex live appearances are now full-on 21st century showbiz. Amid a blitz of boisterous beats, freestyle rhyming and rowdy egobumping, he bridges standup comedy, electronic music, performance art and HipHop. For Kidwell, the difference is obvious: "People don't have to convince themselves it was a good show."

Cex is one of a growing number of pupils in a new American school which includes close friend and ally Kid606, Lesser, Hrvatski, Maruman and Blectum From Blechdom – all artists with strong roots in underground rock and electronic music who've happily jettisoned the sacred and overly precious tenets of both. "I think our

attitude about ambition, accessibility, and fun makes us tangibly different from the bulk of European and pseudo-European IDM," Kidwell asserts. "And we definitely learned a lot of what not to do from DIY punk's underachieving and often elitist ethos. We bring a more down to earth attitude, a better sense of humour, more showmanship and the ambition to make what we do meaningful to more people than just our immediate peers."

Kidwell's own musical roots are buried in his father's extensive David Bowie collection, plus his own stints in a series of teenage rock groups. But an impulse purchase of Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Vol. 1* led him to electronic music in 1995. Since he spent much of his high school years stranded in his parents' basement in a rural enclave near Baltimore, he had plenty of time to hone his knob-twisting steeze. At 17 he founded his own Underscore label and released his debut album, *Cex Sells* (1998), which quickly established him as a fully fledged member of the American IDM underground. If at first he embraced the scene, he soon found it too insular – "People who went to use their music as a motif to keep the peasants at bay," he jives, adding that he found too much of this music "more process-oriented than outcome-oriented." He continues: "I listen to it and all I can hear is a very impressive night of programming some patch that was then turned on and let run for five minutes. A lot of guys, if you want to talk to them about a song, you're going to talk to them about a program, not some inspiration."

A longtime HipHop fan, Kidwell's own musical inspirations eventually drifted from the likes of Squeakpusher to the likes of Timbaland and Swizz Beatz. Meanwhile, his live freestyle rhyming, which began as a grot, grew more and more intense. Soon after the release of his 2000 Tigerbeats debut, *Rope Model*, he conceived an album that would feature his favourite indie-Hip MCs rhyming over his beats. Scheduling difficulties alone forced him to reconsider

the idea – and the realisation that it would put him back behind his laptop sunk fit for good. He remembers thinking, "It's probably the wrong idea, very presumptive, a big mistake for me to rhyme myself – people would have a problem with it. But that's why I should do it. Playing it safe isn't interesting."

Thus was born *Tall, Dark And Handcuffed*, a straight-up Cex HipHop album straight outta Baltimore, due on Tigerbeats this spring. The result isn't likely to convince any Jay-Z fans to sign onto the Cex mailing list, but it reveals just how far Kidwell has come since he used to be his own ad hoc hype man. *TDH* is full of sacrificing either his "#1 entertainer" persona or the intelligent goofball behind it. "I think the kneejerk reaction is going to be, 'He's a white MC, he says something about going platinum, he's got gold teeth – he's a joke,'" Kidwell admits. "But I think five minutes with the lyrics would dispel that. There's definitely a lot of anti-intellectual messages on the record, but there are messages: you can have fun with music, it doesn't have to be a terrible thing if you smile at a show. It doesn't devalue an artist because he made a joke one time."

Even before his MC Cex set hits the record bins, Kidwell is already preparing an album of contemplative, beat-laced, guitar-based songs called *Being Ridden* for Baltimore-based Temporary Residence Ltd this summer. He's aware that some of his listeners may baulk at yet another whipsaw change of direction, but he remains sanguine about his career to date, regardless of where he takes it from here.

"If I've done anything right, it's been being unabashed and unashamed and saying, 'Here's all these horrible mistakes I made, here's me flying by the seat of my pants, here's the bad attempt at a John Waters moustache I tried,'" he concludes. "I'm not trying to pretend it's anything more than me and my goofy attempt at art and a career and stuff." □ *Tall, Dark and Handcuffed* will be released on Tigerbeats in April.

THE ENTERTAINER. BY LEE GARDNER





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"Imagine early Grandaddy shadowboxing with Kid Koala" NME

"Coming across like Neil Young with a beehive and a turntable. Pneumonia is ineffably lovely and weird. It would be very surprising if his debut album was not nominated for the Mercury Music Award" THE TIMES

"Special Brew with Kid Koala. Neil Young and some crazy horse named eccentric. Inspired or just plain stoopid? Dunno, but its fucking great" DJ MAGAZINE



# All Tomorrow's Parties 1.1

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Behind The Wall  
Stephen Malkmus  
Good Kids Egg  
Stereolab  
Old Lions  
Bardo Pond  
White Stripes (The Traveller)  
Cat Power  
Come On In My Kitchen  
Papa M  
How Can I Tell You I Love You?  
Cannibal Ox  
Pidgeon  
Dead C  
Leaf Segment  
Boredoms  
Super Now  
Kevin Drumm  
My Tree Bears No Nuts - Part 2  
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a sprawling dedication to influences and inspirations. Howe, Joey and Johnny display an admirable "mixure of respect and disregard for convention." -MOJO  
special guests include PJ Harvey & Grandaddy

cover magazine



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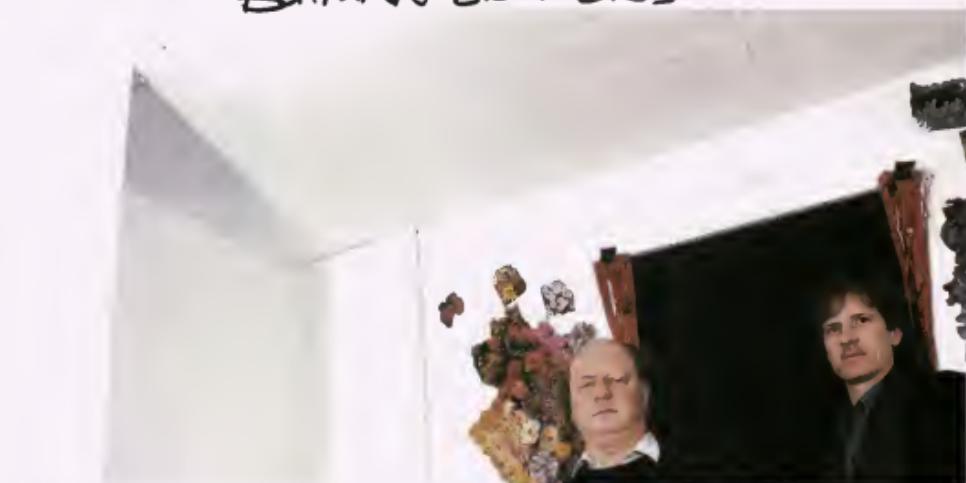
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SIBLING REVELRY. BY BEN WATSON

## BOHMAN BROTHERS



Twisted: Adam (left) and Jonathan Bohman

Describing the sequence of tracks on The Bohman Brothers' new CD *A Twist For All Pockets*, Jonathan Bohman uses a cinematic analogy: "The introduction – which we called 'Bondol Dip' – is a descent into the world of the Bohmans, rather like in a David Lynch film, where someone has a heart attack, and [Lynch] takes you right down into the grass where the guy fell."

London's Bohmans have a taste for the eccentric. Jonathan has been working on his own recorded projects for the last 20 years. His brother Adam, two years older, has had wider involvement with other musicians. Originally introduced to London's experimental music scene in the early 80s, with workshops at the Cockpit Theatre led by composer Ian McQueen, Adam was an early member of Morphogenesis, Roger Sutherland's team of desktop improvising noise-makers. In 1993, he played Derek Bailey's Company Week as part of Conspiracy, the Gothic Improv quartet led by keyboardist Nick Coady, where his homemade amplified strings were crucial to the group's echoing, sinister sound-world. The first time this winter saw him perform solo, he was outside artist Richard Crow's *Institution Of Rot* (a house installation in North London), scraping the kitchen windowpane with a pifconfork, and whispering through a microphone that he was going to take everyone down to the basement for slow torture and slaughter. Adam's spoken word tapes – recorded in situ in a laconic civil servant drawl with stutters on initial 'c's – are legendary. A fine example, alternately hilarious and terrifying, concludes *A London Compilation*, issued in 1995 on Clive Graham's Paradise Discs label.

Jonathan Bohman declares that an original inspiration was The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, a rare outburst of Dadaist satire within the 60s underground. He also lists various pop auteurs as influences: "I was attracted to that hermetic world of people doing their own thing in

the studio, rather than groups. It appeared romantic to me. People like Frank Zappa – even though he had groups, it was all his own soundworld – Todd Rundgren too, and Prince, Stevie Wonder was another: people who both produced and played. For me the result had a very concentrated feel to it."

Jonathan describes "Dneiro" – the twisted heart of *A Twist For All Pockets* – as the "fever dream" of a prime string quartet. As one might guess from their non-classical backgrounds (Adam cites Electric Light Orchestra, Mahavishnu Orchestra and Henry Cow as early favourites), the Bohman Brothers are not enamoured of the 'acoustic instrumentation and straight recording' purism that persists among some improvisors. However, post-production isn't a matter of disguising imperfections, more of bringing recording media into glaring focus. "Dneiro" is a delicious listen, as the two brothers' different contributions fight and merge on the multitrack, while they add their homemade string instruments at a live performance in Glasgow.

"What we're not so interested in doing is using familiar samples," Adam comments. "Instead we're thinking in terms of the timbres of various instruments. If we went a viola sound, we'd go to an LP that had a viola, but we wouldn't use a particular phrase that would ring bells in people's minds. On 'Dneiro' there's 12-tone viola mixed in with much earlier music from the cellos."

For the last three years, The Bohmans have been holding regular music nights at the Bonnington Centre in Vauxhall Grove, South London. So for they have promoted more than 80 concerts, providing one of the key venues for experimental activity in London. Many of the musicians who play there overlap with those who play at the Klinker, Hugh Metcalf's club on the Hackney/Islington borders, but there's a difference.

Sets are longer, there's less spoken word and songs, it's altogether more musical – DIY Darmstadt rather than DIY cabaret, perhaps. Jonathan: "Once or twice I've been phoned by people – God knows why – who've said, 'I want to play the Bonnington, I've got these songs', and it's obvious they'd be better off playing somewhere else. They haven't really got the idea that the Bonnington is for experimental music."

Nevertheless, the two clubs are complementary, and the Bohmans hope to be part of a mooted 'Klinker Club On Tour' package. Their efforts have paid off: the brothers have appearances lined up into midyear, plus five concerts in Holland in April.

It is hard to describe the raw, explosive audio art they perpetrate. Everyday objects and sounds are worked on until they become saturated with lung suggestion, resulting in a bizarre, hysterical immediacy. The convulsive beauty of "Dneiro" bears comparison to both composers James Dillon and Helmut Lachenmann and to sound terrorisers Furt and Bark. Nevertheless, in the best traditions of Bonzo Dog, The Bohman Brothers' kitchen sink realism laughs at the grand claims of lofty art. They will show you fear in a sponge from the drainer.

At one point, Adam Bohman was making sculptures by immolating plastic detritus in his parents' back garden. Paul Obermayer, the sampler from Furt, received a tape cassette with a bulbous plastic exorcism on the side. After a week, the plastic went "horrible" and insects started creeping out of it. Alarmed, Obermayer phoned Bohman: "What was that you sent?" "Oh," came the reply, "It's a ham roll I covered in melted plastic." Finally, an image adequate to The Bohman Brothers sound: □ *A Twist For All Pockets* is out now on Rosstiv. For details of The Bohmans' club nights at London's Bonnington Centre, which changes name every month, see *Out There*



"I enjoy erasing myself, though I retain a kind of presence," says Swiss-born sound artist Christof Migone, now based in New York. Soft-spoken almost to the point of inaudibility in person, on record he gives the impression of being just barely there even when he's singing. On *Escape Songs*, a collaboration in progress with Canadian singer Veda Hille that features rare vocal performances by Migone, the duo's voices hang by less than a thread - hesitant, fragile, afraid or unwilling to make a commitment. With reverberous close miking bringing every lipsmack into relief, the recordings are strikingly pure and almost uncomfortably intimate. Yet Migone and Hille frequently drift out of the frame, as if they were unaware that their private voice games and uncalculated electronic noodlings were even being observed.

Fragility is a state that particularly interests Migone - specifically the fragility of the human mind, body and language capability. His recent performance piece *Evasion* involved him attempting to stick his tongue out for nine minutes. Like going for extended periods without sleep, such an act pushes the body into an unfamiliar, uncomfortable and somewhat precarious state. "Evasion lets the muscles of the tongue and jaw take over," Migone explains, "or at least come onto the surface, interacting with the message that my conscious is sending me throughout: 'Get this tongue back inside!'" A video recording of the piece, showing only his tongue, with Migone himself retelling a shadowy presence, documents his physical struggle to resist his brain's warnings, saliva dripping involuntarily from his mouth.

Much of Migone's work revolves around issues of control and lack thereof, and the struggle between the two. "In our constant attempts to rein ourselves in, things invariably slip," he says. "But the slippage is perhaps more an excess than a lack, or paradoxically both, as in a leak." Among the "leaks" that have long interested him are speech disorders and vocal accidents, normally unacknowledged or prettified for

public presentations. His 1996 CD, *Hole In The Head*, which contains cut-up and processed voices culled from his longrunning phone-in radio show on Montréal's CKUT, was inspired by écrits bruts (writings of the insane) as well as psycholinguist Roman Jakobson's studies of aphasia. Replete with all manner of gasps, groans, sputters and cries of anguish, the disc's 61 short collages approximate a kind of aural schizophrenia, offering a disquieting reminder of just how thin the dividing line between 'normality' and 'madness' is.

The recently released *Crackers* CD, which collects recordings of people cracking various parts of their bodies (knuckles, back, knees, etc.), is another study of this control/lack of control dialectic. To Migone, the tension and release inherent in the decision to crack or not reflects in microcosm the tension between order and chaos in the larger world. Sometimes a joint insists on being cracked, and if ignored it may crack it'self anyway; an uncracked joint can also make it painful for you to stand up, thereby forcing you to crack it. While *Crackers* is ostensibly a much simpler sound project than the incredibly dense, obsessively cut and layered recordings that comprise *Hole In The Head*, Migone says it's "just obsessive in a different way." Indeed, wanting to ensure the cracks sounded real, it took him three years to complete the CD's basic recordings. "Paradoxically, the [initial] recordings were too successful," Migone recalls. "They instantly sounded like digital glitches. Yet retaining the somatic rawness was the crucial element." Without any prior knowledge, however, it's difficult to identify exactly what the flurries of apparently electronic clicks actually are. Finding out can be a shock. "One of the things that interests me in the work," he says, "is that moment where one realises that these are sounds of joints cracking; sometimes the resulting cringe produces a cognitive dissonance, and that movement against the grain of one's enjoyment and preconception enriches the work."

Produced during his years living in Montréal, where he collaborated with such radio art lumineuses as Dan Lander and Gregory Whitehead, Migone's radio work also went against the grain. Well, the way he heard it, he was attempting to resuscitate what he perceived to be a virtually lifeless medium. "Radio voices are dead on arrival... well-coined and articulated... arid and dehydrated," he wrote in an article for the recently published collection, *Experimental Sound And Radio* (edited by Allen S Weiss for MIT Press). In his own work, Migone sought to banish the antiseptic, hyper-articulate speech that dominates radio. In its place, he positively embraced the imperfections and unpleasantness that make up communication in everyday life. He also tried to break down talk radio's standard host/caller relationship: "I was really trying to have a total contrast from talk radio and say, 'I'm not going to play the role of radio host, not going to present a topic of the day, not going to monitor how long you talk as a listener.'"

He provided open phone lines, sometimes leaving the studio and letting callers talk among themselves, or calling in from public phones to join the discussion like any other listener. The unmediated and often intensely personal tone of his show even attracted a stalker. He recalls, "I was so much trying to bypass this mass communication thing by being very intimate on the radio, and that probably didn't help matters. Also in some ways my voice, not only its tone but also the bawdry in which I presented it, somehow triggered something in her."

Migone may be flirting with yet more danger with his forthcoming *Crackers* video, in which he plans to put himself in the frame, filming himself recording people cracking their joints - a very close and intimate process. More than the audio version, he concludes, "it's much more about the relationship. I mean, have you ever seen a chiropractor crack someone's back? It's actually very sensual." □ *Crackers* is out now on Locust. Website: christofmigone.com

CRACKED IN THE HEAD, BY DAVE MANDL





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MUTABLE FEAST. BY JULIAN COWLEY

# Thomas Buckner

"Essentially, I'm trying to do things that I feel really strongly about and that no one else is going to do," says singer Thomas Buckner, an impassioned and adventurous performer and promoter of American music caught in the slipstream between modern composition and jazz. He's talking about Mutable Music, his recently launched record label, but such enthusiasm characterises all aspects of his work over the past three decades. The label supports composers attuned to improvisation, including musicians with a jazz background. Pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, bassist Mel Graves and drummer Jerome Cooper

are among the artists on the label. Mutable also revisits Buckner's previous recording venture, 1750 Arch Records, based in Berkeley, California. "The 1750 Arch project began with a concert series in 1972," he recalls. "I was trying to reflect non-commercial musical activity in the Bay Area: unusual classical music, some World Music – Indian, Chinese, Japanese – early music, electronic and experimental music and some jazz, although we were in a residential neighbourhood and agreed not to use a trap-set." Soon he was presenting up to four concerts a week for ten months of the year in a cheaply acquired house which had been unoccupied since the 1950s. Attendance was restricted to 50 people, but a small recording studio was installed, enabling them to reach a far larger audience via weekly live broadcasts over local radio station KPFK. The venture continued for eight years until the funding ran out.

Partly through Buckner's connivance, the building became the University of California's Centre for New Music and Audio Technology under the directorship of David Wessel. A planned Mutable release will present Wessel's electronics and Buckner's voice improvising with pianist Alasdair William Matthew, drummer George Marsh and trombonist George Lewis. 1750 Arch issued more than 50 albums before it folded.

Buckner then moved to New York to concentrate on performing. "The back catalogue is not mine," he reveals. "When 1750 Arch Records closed, I gave each of the projects to the principal person in that project. Some went to other labels." So German label Wergo acquired landmark recordings of Conlon Nancarrow's *Studies For Player Piano*, and CRI issued *New Music For Electronic And Recorded Media*, a showcase for women composers with Pauline Oliveros as consultant. Those important releases were produced by Charles Amirkhanian, who also curated *10 + 2*, an anthology of American sound poetry and experimental texts which Buckner now hopes to rerelease as a Mutable CD. He has already retrieved *Ethnic Fusion*, a beguiling set by hand drummer Big Black and guitarist Anthony Wheaton, and two albums by Space, Buckner's trio with saxophonists Roscoe Mitchell and Gerald Oshita. Randy Weston's solo piano album, *Blue*, is about to be coupled with a new solo set, *Ancient Future*, and released as a double CD.

Buckner is perhaps best known for his performances in Robert Ashley's operas. Their association dates from 1983 when the 1750 Arch Ensemble, a 23 piece group, commissioned a piece from Ashley. Since then Buckner has been a regular collaborator, improvising in accordance with the composer's guidelines, realising "the musicalisation of the melody inherent in the declamation of the text".

Another notable collaboration has been with former Art Ensemble Of Chicago multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell, in his New Chamber Ensemble and various improvising contexts. "Roscoe came to the Bay Area with Lester Bowie and Malachi Favors in the mid-80s," Buckner remembers. "First time I heard them they'd moved in across the street from David Wessel. I heard interesting music coming out of this house. When I went to bed, music was still coming out of the house. Next morning music was still coming out of the house. We went over and found their instruments set up and

in front were sleeping bags on the floor – a big revelation to me as to what is involved in becoming a good improviser." Later, when Buckner, Mitchell and Oshita formed Space, they sought out the seclusion of a "tiny village in Italy and played all day, every day for a month".

The Mutable catalogue contains such gems as *8 O'Clock: Two Improvisations*, documenting a December 2000 encounter between Buckner and Mitchell; and *Jump The Circle, Jump The Line*, showing the singer at work with electronics specialist Tom Hamilton. "As a solo performer I made a decision not to control electronics myself," Buckner says. "I wanted the challenge to come up with timbres that were naturally made, relating to the acoustics of the voice." In the duo Hamilton uses a processing system that treats Buckner's baritone in unpredictable ways. "You get rid of that one to one relationship."

Buckner has continued his energetic, deeply committed promotion of contemporary music, overseeing, since 1989, the World Music Institute's Interpretations concert series, some of which was recorded on *Sign Of The Times* (Lovely Music), his second solo album. He is keen to preserve his identity as a performing artist, presenting *Dwende*, his collaborative composition with Anna Lockwood, and a piece by Cuban composer Tania León at San Francisco's Other Minds Festival this month. Projects with bassist Jon Deak, poet Chris Mann, composer David First, percussionist "Fast Forward" and an opera by Stephen Dickman, based on the Mesopotamian *Epic Of Gilgamesh*, are all scheduled. "I'm trying to be strict with myself," he declares. "When I stopped running the concert series in California and the record label and started concentrating on my own music, the pleasure I got from it, and the cushion, went way up. Now I'm trying to do those things without that changing." □ *Jump The Circle, Jump The Line* is out now on Mutable Music.



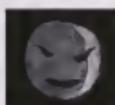
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## Global Ear: Riga

**A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: on the edge of the Baltic, Latvia's capital is a hidden labyrinth of post-Industrial science. By Viestarts Gailitis**



Luthien Scherzer (left) is joined by Ruth Kressel, Marlene Grunberg (in white) and Leslie Koenig.

In the damp cellar of Riga's Metro club, noise duo Radio Kaput's chaotic, interrupted radio transmissions, crackles, hum, blue lights and twinkling radio transmitter bulbs call to mind a mysterious abandoned submarine or a surreal industrial facility where mad scientists perform their earth-threatening experiments. The Metro, an old, low wooden mansion in the heart of the city's Art Nouveau high-life centre, is where the capital's underground comes up for air. As their name suggests, Radio Kaput perform a kind of a post-apocalyptic broadcast. Its shaven headed, white-clad young operatives improvise with sounds sourced from a set of antique shortwave radios hooked together in a remarkable installation. Oddly enough, people are actually dancing.

Unusual instruments, performance spaces, technological innovation and an urge to transcend society's mental bondage (a trait inherited from Soviet times) have long been part of Riga's progressive music scene. This liberal approach is rooted in the scene's amateurism and art circle origins, rather than in the conservatory, Riga's noise and industrial set, to which Radio Kaput loosely belongs, is the wildest in terms of seeking out unexpected forms of expression.

The city's underground surfaced in the early 80s around the NSRD (whose acronym translates as Laboratory for the Restoration of Non-Existing Feelings), an outfit consisting of the architect and eccentric avant garde music godfather Hards Leidins and his colleague Juns Bokas. Their first recording, 1984's *Kunserdof Uz Ondeskis* (Kunserdorf And Ondeskis), is an absurd, poetic descent into the realm of dreams, with weird voices mumbling over analogue melodies, distortion, effects and tambura. NSRD's activities also involved performance. For six years running (1982-87) they filmed and recorded a march with sax and trumpets along the railway line to Riga's seaside suburb Bolderijs. The chameleonic Leidins still makes both ambient and experimental soundtracks.

The industrial wasteland left behind by the Soviets now serves as a home for stray cats. It also provides artists an inspirational terrain for experimentation. Besides its desolate vistas, musicians venture there for its acoustic properties. One such 'studio' in a northern suburb is inside an old factory plant with a huge round tank that looks like a giant tin can. It makes a great laboratory of echoes, where sounds

enjoy an extended life reverberating around the tank. 20 year old keyboard virtuoso Martínez González explores the tank's special acoustics with guitar and a instrument called the 'waterglass', while the other two members of his *Turbulencias* project, Valdeman and Helena, contribute tabla, percussion, guitar and vocals. 'You could call this electronic music, but it is recorded mainly in real time, by using acoustic instruments and the acoustics of the space. We just retained electronic aesthetics,' explains Valdeman. The tracks are mixed down in a small, roundown rundown in an ancient horse post building. It is the headquarters for the alternative Internet radio station [Ragasound.org](http://Ragasound.org), and the nerve centre for some of Regal's most adventurous musical projects.

Gonzalez is renowned locally for his golden touch. He applies an uncompromising attitude to all his projects, whether it's playing keyboards in post-rock group Sirke or combining soft, sensual rhythms and psychedelic elements on his antique Rhodes in the soul/funk inspired Kuba.

With the advent of powerful computers in 1997, the Latvian electronic music scene exploded. Although still largely unknown to the outside world, it's already amassed a young and devoted digital army, many of them New Media people involved in building radio stations, Net art projects, Web design and DJ and VJ collectives. *Netart*, *Musique*, Bio-codes, *Koala-music* and *BOB*, to name a few. Bio-codes member Brain is also the creator of *imagine*, organic Web designs and thumping Techno tracks. His devotion is characteristic of many of the artists in this milieu. "I think what I do is sometimes more important than myself," he asserts. One thing they're not in it for is the fame. Local Techno star *Alexander* has consciously avoided public attention for years.

Kolka Music, a "non-commercial post-digital music label", includes members of the legendary 90s group Yagutima a Sound System, an innovative unit that merged acoustic and electronic music to create a rare blend of alternative rock, electronica, Easy Listening, and 80s-style new wave. Formed by Kini Vassina and Judgen Pitch, they're one of the most interesting outposts in Baltic electronica. Kolka are currently producing what they call "microwave or microscopic" sound. Judgen is also one of the composers involved in the electronica and poetry project Orbita. An ironic homage to the new Regg, Orbita's last CD took a laconic and detached yet sensual word and sound journey through the trials of post-Soviet life.

Participating poet Sergei Timofejev describes their work as "a form of poetry where ways of performance are essential". Riga's age-old multibehinic flavour achieves its most beautiful expression in the realm of music and poetry. Suggestive Slavic emotionalism shadows Latvia's characteristic withdrawn lyricism,

The Industrial/noise scene is the most popular local musical underground. One of Riga's noise pioneers goes by the name of Error, a conceptual sound artist whose latest project involves sampling a radio evangelist whose heavily distorted, morose voice pedagogically states the 'ments of terrestrial life. "Today I got poisoned by butter," he says, "that was God's will" ("Butter" is modern Latvian slang for "Pessimism, Oblivion, We all live and die in pain"). The absurdity of such public discourse is an endless source of Error's inspiration.

The noise scene reveals how young Latvian minds are caught in a no-man's land between the mental debris of the Soviet era and the new social order. Trapped in the void between the two systems, they trust neither, projecting their disillusionment by depicting a society run by a power-machine, chaos or cash - beyond the control of individual human beings. For some, the collapse of the previous totalitarian ideology created a void that has been filled by a *university nihilistic mentality*.

dissonance, nothing amiss.

Thankfully, nihilism hasn't gripped the entire Industrial milieu. For Laups, a devout Catholic from Dark Ambient to Claustrum, "Darkwave speaks for the unknown within us." With its processed electromagnetic waves sucked in from outer space, their last project, *Laume Ambiance*, suggests they're also searching for the unknown outside us. Its predecessor, *Tsolano*, is both an audio soundtrack and an interactive project, made in collaboration with the audio-visual outfit Semenza, where listeners can program the sounds themselves. Every sound created brings up a corresponding image. This is Claustrum's own version of machine-generated music – what Laups calls a product from the "generation of Leo Muskans that put together blocks of sounds". Listeners interacting with artists? Whatever became of Industrial culture's usual fatalism? Like the rest of the Linzian underground, Industrial is a zone where even the most entrenched certainties are open to dispute. □

Websites: [www.bio-codes.net](http://www.bio-codes.net), [www.kokamusik.net](http://www.kokamusik.net), [www.lab.net](http://www.lab.net), [rgaussound.org](http://rgaussound.org), Westarts Galinis is a correspondence for Deine, a *lyrics on paper*.

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# Invisible Jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear



## Steinski

Tested by Hua Hsu. Photos by Kareem Black

In 1983, Steve Stein was a thirtysomething advertising executive with a serious love of HipHop, the new sound of his native New York streets. He and friend Douglas DiFranco (aka Double Dee) came across an ad for a remix contest presented by the up-and-coming Tommy Boy label, and a weekend later the two had become local legends getting props from Afrika Bambaataa for their frenetic winner, known today as "Lesson 1: The Payoff Mix". Their subsequent work - "Lesson 2: The James Brown Mix", "Lesson 3: The History Of Hip-Hop" and Steinski & Mass Media's "The Motorcade Sped On" - has become HipHop legend, laying out the blueprint for the cut 'n' paste narrative styles championed today by artists like Coldcut, DJ Shadow and Kid Koala.

Born and raised in suburban Mount Vernon, Stein attended the tiny, now defunct Franconia University in New Hampshire, which not only got him out of Vietnam, but also gave him access to some of the freakiest jazz and rock of the day (as well as a pretty good story about the whole student body and faculty showing up to a soccer game on acid). After bumming around for the larger part of the 1970s, he settled down in an advertising job in the early 80s that finally gave him enough spending money to buy copious amounts of records.

While it's been nearly 20 years since Double Dee & Steinski released their three seminal "Lessons", Stein is painfully modest about his accomplishments. After spending much of the 1990s building his one-man advertising company, Steinski is back with a clutch of exciting new projects, including a jawdropping mix sequence for Ninja Tune's *Solid Steel* radio show, collaborative work with Amon Tobin, and an album of "duets" with Coldcut, Afrika Bambaataa, Z-Trip and DJ Food. There have even been "exploratory conversations" regarding a new "rock" version of "Lesson". The Jukebox took place in the recording studio at Stein's office in midtown New York.

## JOHN & ERNEST

"SUPER FLY MEETS SHAFT"  
(FROM RAINY WEDNESDAY 7/1 1972)

[Listen to entire song] Yeah that was great, [island A&R man] Joel Weber played it for me once. [Imitates record] "Super Fly and President behind closed doors - holding hands and making plans: 'That's a nice piece of work. That's a total rip from [William] Buchanan And [Orville] Goodman" [record producers active from the 50s whose spoof recordings utilised collage, 'breakin' and splicing techniques]

Actually, it is Dickie Goodman. Though the record's credited to 'John & Ernest', it's actually a Goodman production. No Buchanan, though - the 'Ernest' was credited as one Sal Passantino.

Those two guys started that period [of cut 'n' paste records], unless somebody comes along and says, 'Oh look, [something else] was around in 1950', I heard the very first one - "The Flying Saucer" - on a jukebox in a Chinese restaurant in MI Vernon when I was about five or six, I remember thinking, "Wow, this stuff is so exciting! Wham bam bam bam!" [Imitates record] "This is your on the spot reporter coming to you from downtown, but wait, there's a flying saucer landing..." and they have Smiley Lewis's "I Hear You Knocking" and all kinds of shit in there. In the 1950s, that was a thing... people would talk about flying saucers and shit. We've sampled it a couple of times. "The flying saucers are real!" Douglas [DiFranco, aka Double Dee] and I took a couple of things out of those. I have a whole bunch of bootleg records of Buchanan And Goodman-type stuff.

## MILES DAVIS

"IN A SILENT WAY (REHEARSAL)"  
(FROM THE COMPLETE IN A SILENT WAY SESSIONS  
COLUMBIA LEGACY 1988)

[Waits until Davis's horns come in] I heard this period of Miles for the first time when I was in college in 1971. It made a tremendous impression. Up until that point, jazz was either Wes Montgomery - and I felt it was being extremely dancy listening to Wes Montgomery - or jazz was like [beatboxes a bebop pattern] bebop type shit, or square than that. [Hearing this] was like, 'Oh, this is jazz? This is nice! It opened up all the lines all of a sudden.'

Part of the genius of this record is *Too Macero's* production. Were you aware of the tape splicing when you were getting into this stuff?

I didn't know about *Too Macero* and his idea of, 'You guys just record and we'll make it on a 24 track [sic] afterwards.' Oh, I see, that's the point behind the selection. I didn't know about that stuff until I got into advertising [in the late 70s]. Aside from buying drugs occasionally, the only thing I wanted to do was buy records and books, and I would read about these things. That's when I started hearing, 'Right, Miles would go into the studio and *Too* would just go at it and put these long dissolves on stuff, and OK, we got a 45 minute record!' It was fascinating. It can be argued that you and DiFranco, had a similar approach in the studio, manipulating tape and splicing various sources. Was the stuff *Macero* doing influential at all?

In terms of cut 'em up stuff, Buchanan And Goodman were a much stronger influence. It was a lot like the radio when I grew up, I loved it. This stuff [points to Davis CD] didn't really impinge on me. Can you describe how different the radio was back then?

The critical radio stations when I was growing up were WMCA - where the disc jockeys as a group were described as 'The Good Guys' - there was WABC and WINS, where Murray The K was. It was classic Top 40

radio, the DJs would have 15 cartridges cued up with advertisements, sound effects, songs, trainwrecks, whatever they had sounds of. They'd be pumping away at this stuff like the mighty Wurlitzer, just being bang-bang. It was very exciting radio, and the pace and feel and excitement and the not knowing what was going on but knowing it was gonna be exciting, that was a big part of my listening to the radio. I guess another part of it was that at that point the Top 40 wasn't so much in the death grip of record companies as it is now; at the same time as The Beatles, there was Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole and Louis Armstrong, you had all kinds of different shit breaking on the radio. There was no particular relation between those things, as opposed to the current situation where "This is what the corporations want to push", I got used to a wide variation presented in the hamilton-schemer method.

So what do you think of the argument that places, say, The Invisible Skratch Pilz and DJ Shadow as descendants of avant garde figures like Macero or Stockhausen?

Working pretty hard, aren't they? Drawing the line is tough. It seems to me like it's the same urge that's coming up in people, it's just the time and facilities available when that urge shows up. Stockhausen and them cats have the urge, and this is what comes out of it then. Then the next group of people to get the urge could be Buchanan And Goodman, but it's a completely different setting, so they do it that way. Then the urge comes up with The Skratch Pilz and them cats, and it happens that way. You're tracing the urge more than you're tracing The Skratch Pilz - knowing about Stockhausen, I mean, yes. [Macero] is in many ways a pioneer, but for me it was Buchanan And Goodman, they were doing it long before him. Nothing against *Too*, his shit is fabulous.

## TRANS LUX

"BIG APPLE NOISE"  
(FROM MASTER MIX 12" 1983)

I think I played one of these, is this one of Began Celico's records? Sure, I remember this. He was turning these out of his garage in Brooklyn.

Celico was a kind of early bootleg/megamix tycoon who did his own versions of big disco records or made collages of the year's big breaks. Were these records influential for you and Douglas?

Sure. Not as much with me as with other people, maybe The Latin Rascals and people like that. I generally find this stuff not quite as funky as I would have liked. A lot of the stuff coming out at the time, I listened to it and thought it was pretty mechanical. I listened to a lot of this stuff because I was buying everything that was coming out, but I never thought I'd want to make a record like that.

Douglas's abilities were so up that he didn't need a basic electronic track to go up against. He could just make the records flow into each other seamlessly, and it was like, 'OK, if we don't need that extra superstructure, then why have it?' He could make the records sound good, so the sequins weren't strong records going into weak records or very loud and then not very loud. Douglas is a genius in the studio, and that's why a lot of our records sounded the way they did and not like things like this.

There were a lot of electro mixes coming out in the early 1980s, but you seem to draw a line between what they were doing and what you and DiFranco were doing. How would you characterise that difference?

A lot of this stuff uses a more electronic beat. You can hear the filters working on this stuff and you can hear the synths. With our stuff, we would take instrumental

# Invisible Jukebox

tracks that didn't sound very much like this [Roland BOB drum machines phasing away in the background], it was just our taste. We would loop the two bars of the drummer going such and such and put two or three things on top of that, as opposed to this. Also our records were more conceived of like a five minute sprint; they had a beginning, a middle and an end. They went up and down. Records like these were more conceived to be mix elements. You can move into it from another record, move out, they're more regular and the overall feel is the same. Our stuff tended to be a little crisper, more left turns, more [sneezes out a Looney Tunes cuckoo sound].

## JUNIOR

### 'MAMA USED TO SAY'

(FROM MERCURY '77 1981)

I love this record, man. It's such a lovely, big sounding party record, even though his voice has a slightly operatic, over the top quality. [Emulates Junior hitting the climactic high note] Goddamn, he's got that note and he's gonna hold onto it! The '12" of this had a great cover, with the Marini glass, I loved that!

This was one of the fun moments of "Lesson 2", catching Junior mid-throttle before cutting to the B-Boys. Did you and Douglas map out the songs beforehand?

No, just boxes of records. Shit man, I can't plan my life, much less plan a record.

**Really? Did you have a lot of experience with mixes?**  
No. We were just farthing around, we would occasionally rent a piece of equipment and fuck around. We were ready to do something with a beginning and finish, so it was good that the contest came along. A friend of ours was working at a producer for CBS Records. He came in one day with a copy of Billboard and he said, "Here's this contest, you guys should enter it." It was Tommy Boy's "Hey Mr. DJ" contest. It was a contest to make a five minute megamix using anything you wanted and remix this record, it was basically for home DJs. So, "OK, let's do it this weekend, that'll be fun." We went to the Roxy [the NYC rollerskating rink that hosted a pioneering HipHop weekly] Friday night. On Saturday Douglas came over to my house and we loaded in a whole bunch of records and went up to my studio. We knocked down and worked till real late. The next morning we came back in and finished it. It was one turntable and an eight track tape deck. I can't mix. Neither can Douglas. We couldn't step to the most amateur San Francisco kid.

**How was the record distributed?**

At first it was just a re-to-reel tape that was sent out to a dozen radio stations, and that's when it really started to get hot. In Philadelphia, kids were taping the mix when it came on – you'd hear the end of the DJ's rap going into the mix going into the commercial – and selling them on the street for 20 bucks. I knew a guy in England who told me, "Oh yeah, we paid 60 quid for one of those cassettes and we were playing it in our club."

### AFRIKA BAMBAATAA/AFRIKA ISLAM/ JAZZY JAY (ATTRIBUTED)

#### "FUSION BEATS VOLUME 2"

(FROM BOZO MIKE '77 EARLY 1982)

Back in the days of the manual, mechanical pause buttons. This is the Bambaataa thing on Bozo Meko, "Fusion Beats". It was a pause button edit, it was astonishing!

**Can you explain the pause button edit?**

That's if all you have is one cassette machine and one turntable. A mechanical pause button is one that holds the tension on the tape and pauses the motor and everything so that it's basically ready to break. It's

holding its breath, if you put it in a record and disengage the pause at exactly the moment the beat comes through, you can do loops and transitions. This is pretty primitive shit. You have to be dead-on at the right time. God bless people who did records like that. From what I understand, The Latin Rascals started out like that.

I was at a conference where Afrika Islam was talking about this. I think they just recorded it to cassette. It's a megamix of James Brown, [The Mohawks'] "Champ" – this is the first time I heard Dyke & The Blazers. That's how I got all these original 45s – after hearing "Fusion Beats". That's why I got so excited when I heard that Sonny Hopson record [Original 1969 Philadelphia AM Radio Broadcast, a recently released collection on Philly Archives of live radio broadcasts of the famed DJ who would 'rap' over songs and commercials] – I was like, "What? The break [from Dyke's "Let A Woman Be A Woman" is longer? It was another one of those decisions you make as a record collector that you've got to have this stuff, because you need to have as much of it as possible to represent what was around."

**The way you and Douglas did your mixes was pretty laborious, but did you ever try pause-tapes?**

I wasn't DJing then. When I did pause mixes, it wasn't like looping breaks. It was more like Buchanan And Goodman – fast-cutting one thing over another. I hadn't yet gotten into that vibe of, "Yeah, right man, that loop is great, let's just make that go longer." It took me a while to get up the courage to buy two turntables and a mixer so I could go to the Roxy and listen to this shit and come home and try to do something about it while I still had the fever.

### MASTER JAY & MICHAEL DEE "TSOB"

(FROM TSOB '77 1980)

Oh yeah, that's a hard record! Syndrums... I like that! [Imitates some guy farting around in the studio discovering synth sounds] "Whoopee Hey, electric drums!" That's the kind of thing that makes me wish I'd dug a little deeper back in the day.

**What was it like back then? You just mentioned going to clubs like the Roxy...**

The sound system was fabulous. In the very beginning, the DJ was down on the floors so you could just stand there and 0.5T would be mixing six inches away from you! As the crowd were larger, they had Bam [Bambaataa] and Jazzy Jay up on a raised platform. It wasn't till later that they started using the rollerskating booth. They opened as a Friday-only hip club around 1982.

It was a real democratic atmosphere. There were the ubiquitous Japanese and French film crews, lots of kids who were working at MTV and places like that, lots of people from up town, downtown hipster types. It was a really nice mix. Everybody always got in. There was none of this picking people out of the crowd. It was, "OK, everybody line up over here and we're gonna let everybody in ten at a time." After the contest, we were royalty. It was fucking unbelievable the places we went. Jellybean's booth at the Funhouse. We were hanging in the front of the down face with Jellybean, some serious shit here. It was a blast.

**Do you remember meeting Bambaataa for the first time?**

Oh yeah, of course – who wouldn't? After we had won the contest, Monica [Lynch, former Tommy Boy exec and one third of the staff back then] took us to the Roxy – bussed right through the line. We were standing by the booth and Bam was just up there playing, he leans in and waves. She points at us and says, "These are the guys who did that mix!" His

eyebrows went up and he leans down with his big hands and says, "Nice to meet you guys, good work!" Of course at that point, we were still meeting everybody for the first time and I think everyone was still getting a kick out of it, like, "Oh, they're old and they're white!"

**When you got your break with Tommy Boy, the label, and HipHop as a whole, were still pretty diverse. There was disco/club party rap like this track, and then straight electric like Bambaataa's "Planet Rock" or The Jonzun Crew. Were you interested in both, and were people generally split between rap and more electronic influenced music?**

There weren't enough people into this shit to have a division. Everyone was into everything. Working with a drum machine was easier. At the time, samples and things that could kick an existing loop over and over weren't as prevalent, but you could always find an 808, that's why so many of these records had that "patented electro sound", everyone was using the same equipment. I tended to like the funkier stuff. But there weren't enough people into this shit to have a division. I mean, the Roxy was a huge auditorium, but a lot of times they were only using a third of the floor. Everyone was into everything.

## JOHN F KENNEDY

### SPEECH EXCERPT

(FROM A MEMORIAL ALBUM DEDICATED TO THE 35TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (MODERN SOUNDS 1968)

I own all these records about Kennedy. I own about 2000 spoken word recordings, I have pretty much every Kennedy thing extant.

Though it's one of my least known tracks in HipHop circles, 1988's "The Motorcade Speed On", which cut up samples of the Kennedy assassination, seems to be one of the first attempts to tell a specific story by way of sampling. How did you come to make that after doing such playful stuff with the earlier Tommy Boy "Lessons" records?

I was always listening to vaguely arty shit, like Launde Anderson. Douglas and I had done our first three mixes when he finally decided to go back to work and move out of our apartment. He also didn't want to spend as much time making music anymore. The first record took a weekend, the second record took a month and the third record took like six months. So I was just walking around, thinking about a new record, and I knew I wanted to do something emotional. I wanted to learn how to make records with other people. I booked some studio time and I told the engineer I had the beat from "Honky Tonk Woman" and I wanted to make a record about Kennedy. The New Musical Express put "Motorcade" on a flexi with Sonic Youth and Sly & Robbie. It was enormous in the UK. The American taste moves to the next big thing very quickly. Over in England, they kind of take their time, and things become big there that aren't big here. They were more excited by the ideas.

I wanted to make the most emotional record I could. I wanted it to be moving. I was thinking strictly in terms of sampling spoken word and I wanted to do-dad it up with as much emotional stuff as I possibly could. There were sirens on there, I had a crying baby in there at one point, and this guy I was hanging out with told me it was too fucking scary. I just wanted to make a spooky, emotional record and I really enjoyed that. At the time, there were a lot more people listening to HipHop who were more aware of the Kennedy assassination. There were people whose time that was. I could make a 9/11 record, but unfortunately my take on 9/11 is so not what the mainstream is, I don't want to get lynched, but that would be a similar event. You can hear in those people's voices [on the record] that

their world ended. It was unbelievable. It was me wanting to make a record with a lot of depth – I'm still really happy I did it.

**It seems like so much of today's sample-based instrumental HipHop – especially people who claim to be inspired by you – lack the desire to be narrative-driven like this.**

There's a built-in narrative to "Motorcade", yeah. It's not like I went to a studio record and made a narrative out of it like Kid Koala does. With Shadow or Eric [Koala], there are rises and falls and tension and release, there's a real sensitivity to the material. There's motion to the songs and how they go along. It's not "Oh, we got a hot beat and we can plunk a lot of shit onto it and yahoo."

### CUT CHEMIST

#### "LESSON 4 (THE RADIO)"

FROM UMFID RESOLUTION 12" (TMK) 1995

Wow, you keep on playing me all this old shit! This isn't that old, but it's someone you've definitely had an impact on. You performed with him.

Scratching's real tasty. Much more contemporary-sounding scratching. Ah, it's either Shadow or Chemist. Chemist? Oh this is "Lesson 4". Wow. He

fucking hits me right in the centre every time. He doesn't overdo it, he's always right on with the funk, and the scratching is amazing. He has a real sense of what he's playing you, in terms of the content.

**You know a lot of the newer guys?**

My awareness of much of the stuff that I now know about happened slowly, long after the fact of it actually happening. I'm not terribly proud of being as out of touch with things as I was! Meeting some of these guys is really inspiring. After I left them I came here and started working on my mix for Solid Steel.

Eventually it became more and more involved because I realised, damn, I want this to be really good.

**Your Solid Steel mix has got a lot of contemporary rap that people may not be expecting. What do you look for when you go shopping nowadays? How did you end up using something like blockbuster St Louis rapper Nelly's "Country Grammar"?**

Well, quality of the track obviously, if it's exciting and funky, which is why I suffer so strongly with most of the really commercial rap and a lot of the really intellectual rap at the same time. The track doesn't seem to be as important. On the intellectual side, it's like, 'Hey, let's put in a couple of 5/4 pieces to show people we're really hip!' And then the other guys are

like, 'Well, Wu-Tang is doing a lot of Gothic sounding shit, why don't we do some Gothic sounding shit too?' When I shop, I go to this place and just grab 100 records and just throw them on the turntable. If the track gets my mind, yeah, that's the first thing, "Mo Money, Mo Problems" by Biggie? That track just grabbed me immediately, and I can only think of two other recent songs that made me say, 'That's fucking great': Q-Tip's first single "Vivrant Thing", and "Hot Spot" by Foxy Brown. [Flips through the crate of records on the ground. Laughs and pulls out the Nelly single] What a good record "Country Grammar" is! I'll play you the mix I did on it. [Gives a remix of "Country Grammar", complete with chanting monks creeping out the left channel]

**This is pretty unusual, reworking such a high profile rap tune.**

At the time [of the Tommy Boy contest], we were very old for the demographic. I was already 30. Douglas was 27, we were white. We were already unusual then. Think about how I feel now! I'll be 50 years old and I'm still doing this, excited about being a HipHop producer. I mean, I joined the American Association of Retired People last year! [Additional interview material by Dave Tompkins]



RIDING A WAVE OF NORWEGIAN NEW MUSIC, THE SOFA LABEL COLLECTIVE - INGAR ZACH, IVAR GRYDELAND AND KARL SEGLEM - ARE BREATHING SENSUOUS NEW LIFE INTO FREE IMPROVISATION FROM THEIR OSLO SEAT

WORDS: BEN WATSON

# CHAIRMEN'S COLLECTIVE

READY TO SYRINGE YOUR EARS: KARL SEGLEM WITH RAM'S HORN (BELOW); GUITARIST IVAR GRYDELAND AND DRUMMER INGAR ZACH (OPPOSITE)



**The burgeoning New Music scene** in Norway has made Oslo's Bla Club a busy venue, not just for all varieties of out-noise, electronica, but also for improvisers who wish to drill right down to the form's compacted historical residues and tap its fierce bitumen lakes. When drummer Ingar Zach released an album with Derek Bailey in 2003 (*Liber*, Sofa/NORD), it was a classic move for someone new on the scene. Meanwhile, his guitar playing associate Ivar Grydeland recorded *Trangular Screen* with bassist Tony Klaffen and drummer Tony Oxley. Back in the early 1980s, working with Gavin Bryars in the now legendary Joseph Holbrooke Trio, Bailey and Oxley discovered a suspended sense of time which made British free improvisation distinct from both free jazz and post-Cageian sound experiment. Ordinarily, relative unknowns like Zach and Grydeland teaming up with the distinguished likes of Bailey and Oxley suggests a pair of chancers grabbing attention by their elders' coattails. But *Trangular Screen* indicated Grydeland already had a deeper understanding of Bailey's music than the rockists who equate Bailey's louder side with the proto-punk excesses of *7 & The Mysterians*. And on Zach and Grydeland's duo record *Visiting Arts*, the Norwegians demonstrated they didn't need the help of the founders to play this music. Their CD title also showed they were familiar enough with its legacy to mock the broadbats hurled by free improvisation's detractors. Like so many insults in art wars, the term

'insect music' now sounds like a badge of honour. In an action-packed week last January, Zach and Grydeland visited London. They played at several of the city's improvising hotspots: the Klinker Club (twice), the Red Rose and the record shop and art gallery Sound 323. At the latter they were spoolbending, creating an electric contradiction between trance and humour as they wrestled with their novel sonorities. At the Klinker, joined by bassist Klaffen, the pair did battle with Pat Thomas's stabbing electronic keyboards and Hugh Metcalfe's notorious one man band, enthusiastically embracing both funk and junk. These Norwegians may be Improv fundamentalists, but they're not precious, as anyone who's heard No Spaghetti Edition's *Listen... and tell me what it was*, a notorious international 12-piece orchestra which includes Thomas, will concede.

It is uncanny how Zach and Grydeland can return to the fundamentals of what Joseph Holbrooke played in the early 60s, yet still make music of such sparkle and immediacy. Their playing has none of the cribbed sound of musicians who crave someone else's aura. This is surely because the 'aging' of musical styles is not an automatic result of time passing; it's to do with how it has been taken up, used and abused. Joseph Holbrooke-influenced free improvisation has previously been a closed book in Norway – only composer Arne Nordheim has approached its suspension of time and timbral detail – and the pair use it as a method of creating sonic events rather than a 'style' to be

pasted. Improvisation sounds like sensuous activity, not something to be passively admired and reproduced. Though they are dogged in pursuit of musicians who have been through the Bailey/Oxley system (Thomas found out about improvisation through concerts involving Oxley in Oxford in 1979; Hugh Metcalfe was a member of the Oxley Quartet in 1987, Thomas in 1992), Zach and Grydeland are nevertheless expressing their own personalities. Their delight in shimmer and ear syringing twitters is a further indication of youth.

Ten years older than Zach and Grydeland, Karl Seglem has been a professional musician (tenor sax and ram's horns) since 1985. He has played rhapsodic, folk-inflected free jazz with drummer Terje Isungset for nearly as long. Norwegian jazz used to be dominated by Jan Garbarek's gossy, modal/folk fusion. Until recently, the main dissident was alto saxophonist Frode Gjerstad, who operates from the town of Stavanger. Gjerstad has collaborated regularly with Peter Brötzmann, both in the Borah Bergman Trio and on the 1998 duo CD *Invisible Touch* (Cadence). He previously preferred international bass/drum teams for his own trio – first Johnny Dyani and John Stevens, then William Parker and Hamid Drake. Now, though, Gjerstad is using Norwegian players – another sign of the times. Sofa have recently issued a haunting solo album, *Sticks & Stones*, by Gjerstad's drummer, the



prolific Pål Nilsson-Løve.

Karl Seglem has been running Sofa's parent label NORCD for 11 years, with 40 releases in its catalogue. What is the relationship between the two labels? "When Ingar and Ivar came and said they wanted to start a record company," he explains, "I said, 'Don't do it – join me instead'. I needed to work with someone; I had run it alone for ten years. We reorganised the company, we share it, it's a co-operative now."

The label Sofa because sound engineer Thomas Hultberg sat on Zach's living room sofa to record its first album. The sound of Sofa's releases is exceptionally clean and punchy, indicating a new generation of improvisors with digitally trained ears (in this, it bears comparison to Confront Recordings, the label founded by British cellist Mark Westell, who also runs the Sound 323 space). Zach and Grydeland only met a couple of years ago, but they find they agree about everything musical. They learned about improvisation through British releases and from the Swedish scene around Mats Gustafsson. Seglem tells me he released the debut record by a two called Vestefrekk on NORCD in 1994, before electronics/noise musician Hege Sten from the rock group Motorpsycho joined them and they became Superilent. That outfit became the flagship riding Norway's new musical wave abroad, and the Sofa/NORCD collective agree they are special, though

as Zach points out, "They are different from us. They're improvised, but they have these long noise structures, very horizontal thinking. They are a very good band, they do different stuff all the time."

Ingar Zach never heard Derek Bailey live until he visited him at home in East London's Hackney, played some duets in his sitting room, and invited me to play at BBS in October 2000. This duet became that attention-grabbing Sofa release (I was mentioned earlier). Ivar Grydeland similarly gravitated towards the source of his listening enthusiasms. He originally took up guitar simply because he found one at home – and his mother used to play one with the Salvation Army. Attending Trondheim Academy, He grew increasingly frustrated with his guitar tutors until he got Tony Oxley designated as a teacher – quite a coup considering Oxley plays drums, not guitar.

"It's not important for me to play 'notes', " Grydeland explains. "It's the sound, I see the amplifier and speaker as part of the instrument, not just the guitar. I don't play guitar and electronics, the whole thing is one instrument."

Grydeland is a less antagonistic and argumentative player than Bailey, and his contributions tend to fuse with Zach's metallico soundworld (though of course, that is what happens when Bailey plays with a percussionist as rhythmically compatible as Oxley). Grydeland talks about finding a "language" on his

instrument, employing one of Oxley's key expressions. "We are both still changing the set-ups for our instruments," he says. "I'm still trying to find new things on the guitar. We are still trying to find our own language. You don't see Tony Oxley playing a single drum on its own any more because he's found his language. Of course he is developing that language, but he's found his instrument – I haven't done that yet, I'm still trying."

Following Bailey's habit, Zach is unhappy with any of the various labels that have been stuck to free improvisation. "One has all these sounds in one's head which one doesn't know how to make yet," he explains. "You need to find ways to make those sounds – it requires a lot of thinking, actually."

Both musicians are pleased that the Norwegian union of composers have just accepted a laptop improviser as a "composer", even though he cannot read or write notes. By the end of the interview, the pair are finishing each other's sentences, their discourse as indissoluble as their best music:

"I listen to new contemporary composed music, but not to make structures and compositions for improvisers... We're less interested in that... We're interested in... the sound, not how it was made. It's not that important whether it was composed or not."

Who said what? What does it matter – unless one has copyrighted the phrase? Maybe the Sofa collective don't care about that either. □ Website: sofa.norcd.no

AFTER A CAREER SPANNING SIX DECADES, INCLUDING ENCOUNTERS WITH MILES DAVIS, CECIL TAYLOR, ANTHONY BRAXTON, CHARLIE PARKER, BLUE NOTE RECORDS, AND ROBERT DE NIRO'S MOTHER, FREE JAZZ SAXOPHONIST AND LOFT SCENE PIONEER SAM RIVERS HAS DISCOVERED THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH IN FLORIDA

WORDS: ANDY HAMILTON

OPPOSITE: SAM RIVERS IN NEW YORK CITY, LATE 1950S

# GROWING WITH THE FLOW

**"These questions are hard for me,"** says saxophone colossus Sam Rivers, pondering the question of how the "ecstatic" sounds of black free jazz have managed to cross over to outsider rock audiences in the past few years. "I feel all the music. I feel classical, I feel the blues, I feel the avant garde, I feel bebop." Rivers has an incredible breadth of experience: "I've played with all these musicians – John Lee Hooker, Joe Cocker, T-Bone Walker, Jimmy Witherspoon, BB King, Billie Holiday, Chaka Khan, Jeanne Lee, Kazuko Shirashi, Cecil Taylor, Jackie Byard, Herbie Hancock, Gil Evans, Chick Corea, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Wynton Marsalis, and so on down the line. I've got my list in front of me today... Sorry, it's a really long list! I don't want to stack it up on you."

The list may be long, but the saxophonist shows a quiet dignity, not arrogance, in dwelling upon it. At the age of 78 (some reference books still show him born in 1930 rather than the correct date of 1923), Rivers' individual playing remains amazingly strong. It's astonishing to recall that he's part of the generation of Charlie Parker, though he first came to attention after his move to New York in the 60s. A vital contributor to the city's loft scene through his own Studio RivBea, Rivers performed there with such stalwarts as Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, Dewey Redman and Frank Lowe. He's also worked with European free improvisors like Alex Von Schlippenbach, Albert Mangelsdorff and Evan Parker. His own small groups, notably the 70s trio with Dave Holland and Barry Altschul, or the current one with Doug Mathews and Anthony Cole, have pushed at the boundaries of freedom and abstraction. Yet the saxophonist has never quite received the exposure his originality warrants. Speaking on the phone from his home in Florida, Sam Rivers is lively and eager to talk. He stresses that composition is just as central to his musical vision as improvisation, and he's kept a foot in chord-based jazz as well as free (he was a member of Dizzy Gillespie's small group and big band for four years in the 1980s). "Both approaches are

necessary," he elaborates. "I wouldn't want to play free all the time, and I wouldn't want to play changes all the time, now that I've freed myself from playing them. Well, even when I was playing changes, I was also playing free... With the advent of Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, I had pretty much worked harmonically up to that point, but the next phase was automatically what Cecil and Ornette were doing."

From early in his career, Sam Rivers has followed his own precepts without regard for prevailing fashion. His grandfather was a musician and music publisher, and his parents were gospel singers; his mother from New Orleans, his father a member of the famous Fish Jubilee Singers from Tennessee. This background has meant that while pursuing abstraction, Rivers has regularly drawn on the pool of African-American roots music: blues, gospel, work songs and shouts.

He began on piano and violin, but fell in love with the tenor saxophone in high school. This was back in the late 30s, when he came under the spell of swing-era jazz masters Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young. "I was fortunate not to zero in on one or two people," he declares, "like most of the young musicians have zeroed in on John Coltrane, and inevitably sound like him. There were many other musicians when I was coming up, like Don Byas, Lucky Thompson, Jimmy Forrest, Joe Thomas. All these big bands were around at the time, each had two tenor stars in the band. I was fortunate to be able to go and listen to them, living in Chicago. My mother and father didn't think that much of jazz – they were real church people, into spirituals, and European concert music – but they made sure we got to see these bands anyway."

When he left the Navy in 1947, he wound up in Los Angeles, playing there with bluesmen Jimmy Witherspoon and T-Bone Walker, as well as bebop groups. Moving to the East Coast, he enrolled in the Boston Conservatory on the GI Bill, which provided returning service personnel with financial assistance

for higher education.

He studied composition and viola, playing sax in local groups, and backing R&B singers and show ensembles. He stayed in Boston through the 50s, working in larger groups such as Herb Pomeroy's big band, and in small groups led by Joe Gordon and Joe Byard. Most importantly, he got acquainted with the modern jazz pioneers. "Charlie Parker was a friend of mine," Rivers explains. "He came to Boston when I was a student, and he would stay in our house. I would hear him playing the piano; he would play pretty much like Coleman Hawkins, church chords. Dizzy was far more advanced harmonically than Charlie Parker, more complicated. Charlie Parker was basically playing the blues."

Like John Coltrane's pre-Miles Davis period, Rivers's early career is poorly documented on record. While Coltrane made a few commercially issued recordings, Rivers apparently made none during his stay in Boston. The scene there was fragmentary, and since live jazz at that time was a day-to-day phenomenon, there was no sense of "we have to preserve this". During this period he was honing his completely original approach to improvisation. "I've been philosophically pursuing this process since 1946," Rivers says. "After doing it for so many years... and working at it, it just comes out." But was there a time when he was struggling to learn to improvise? "Yes, but it wasn't from a lack of knowledge of chords, because I was a pianist, and pianists do know their changes." The saxophonist is sceptical about the free improv view that the improvisation should be focused on never repeating yourself. "It doesn't bother me too much to repeat a phrase – as long as I remember that I repeat it, if I don't remember it, I've got a problem!"

In an interview quoted on the original sleeve to his Blue Note album, *Dimensions And Extensions*, he described his search for a unique saxophone sound during the 50s: "I listened to everyone I could hear to make sure I didn't sound like them. I wasn't taking any chances; I wanted to be sure I didn't sound like anyone else." He says now, "I always



BELOW SAM RIVERS NOW  
OPPOSITE SAM AND BEA RIVERS, STUDIO  
RIVBES, NEW YORK CITY, 1972

considered that it's part of the tradition of a jazz performer to make an original contribution. So how do you go about doing this? You don't zero in on one person. The more influences you have, the less any one sticks out." Rivers certainly doesn't play phrases that anyone else does. Nor does he outline the chord changes, and though his lines are interesting, he's not particularly melodic either. His effect can be eerie medy — the nasal sound found in double-reed instruments such as the oboe — even on tenor sax. But his tone is a strong one which can cut through his fellow players, though it's more piercing than Coltrane-overwhelming — a neutral compromise between light and huge, and starkly beautiful. There's no Sam Rivers "school", no disciples; he didn't invent a methodology that could be developed by others, like Coltrane. He's a one-off. I suggest that it must be very difficult for horn players to describe their own tone. "It is," he responds. "No, I can't describe it... I do use a medium need. The softer the need, the more 'needy' the sound... Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, they had boxes and boxes of mouthpieces. I just had one mouthpiece and I wouldn't dare try to change it, because once you change it and you get dissatisfied, nothing's right again."

When Rivers arrived in New York in 1964, already in his early forties, he was a mature but little known stylist. "I came late on the scene," he says. "I came to New York a trained musician, not learning on the job like most musicians of the bebop generation. So did the other musicians of the avant garde, in the late 60s — Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, Hamiet Bluiett, Leroy Jenkins, Muhal Richard Abrams — they came to New York full-fledged musicians. People assumed that I was around their age."

Rivers didn't record for a commercial label until his late thirties, and didn't get to lead a group until around ten years after that. "My recording career really started in 1961 with Tadd Dameron... But it's a mistake to think that a person's career starts from their arrival in New York!" This makes his recorded debut one of the latest of any major jazz figure of his generation.

As with many others, what really lifted Rivers's career was his association with Miles Davis. It came about through Tony Williams, the drummer in Davis's classic 60s quintet. Rivers began working with Williams in 1959, inviting the drummer into his Boston Improvisational Ensemble when he was still only 13. No recordings of that outfit are available, but Rivers has claimed that the ensemble stressed total spontaneity at a time when the New Thing was not yet liberated from grooves and defined structures. Rivers recorded under Williams's precocious leadership on the 1964 Blue Note date, *Lifetime* (later the name of the drummer's defining electric jazz power trio) and *Spring*. These albums featured the drummer's own remarkable compositions. "Well," Rivers remembers, "he sort of hummed each piece to me and I wrote it down. It came from his head. He was a talented young kid!"

By this time Williams had joined Miles Davis, and the saxophonist was brought into the group later in 1964 on his protege's recommendation. "I was touring as music director for T-Bone Walker at the time," Rivers recalls. "Tony Williams had left Boston, and joined Miles Davis. He sent me a telegram saying, 'George Coleman split. Miles wants you to join his group'. So I left T-Bone Walker." He toured Japan with the group, and on the only recorded evidence, Miles in Tokyo, (1964, released in Japan only, although extracts appeared on *Heard Round The World*) certainly fitted into Davis's ethos, more so than any tenor player between Coltrane and Wayne Shorter (and there were a few luminaries

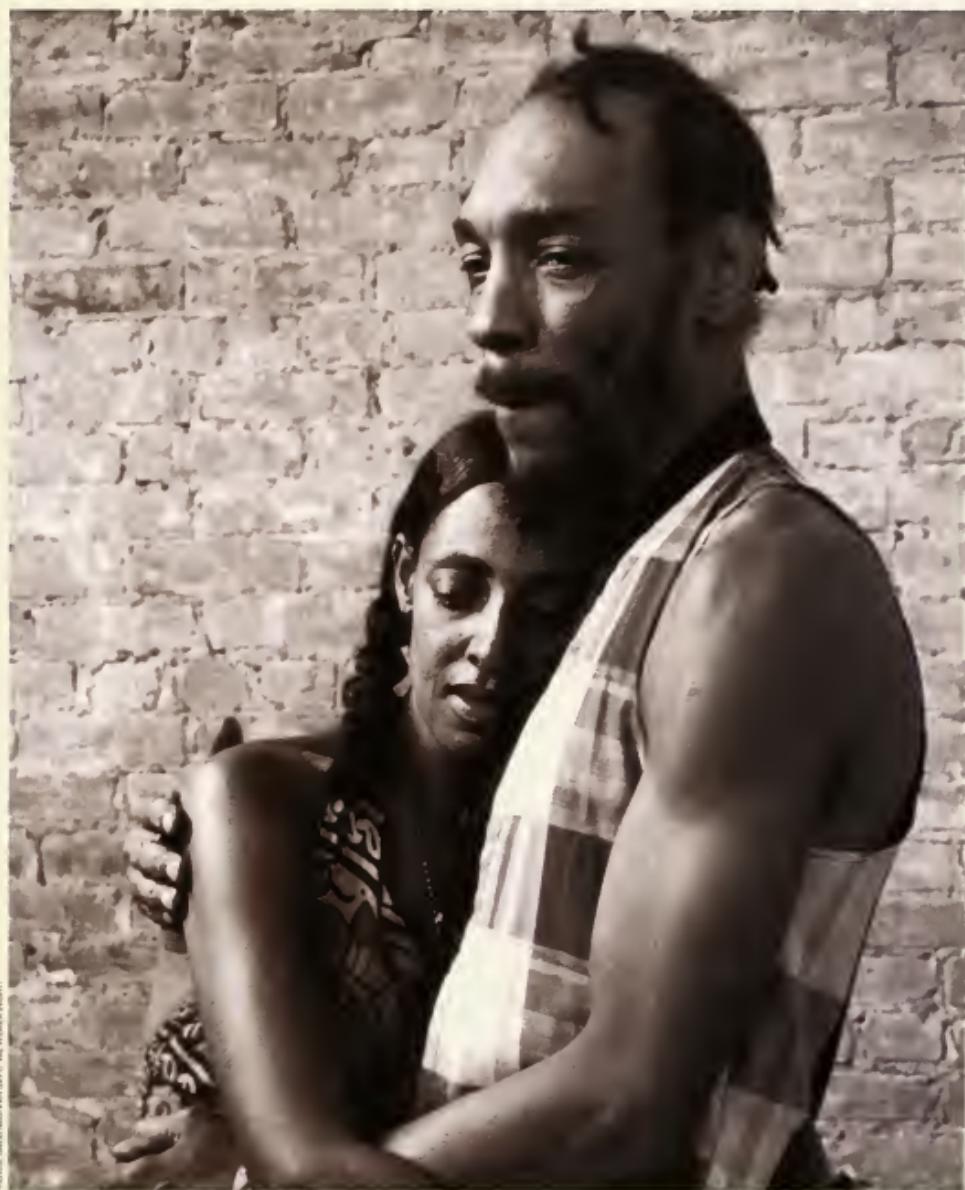
who took that seat — George Coleman, Sonny Stitt and Hank Mobley). But Rivers's distinctive post-bop, incipiently free style proved intractable to Davis, and the association lasted only six months. "What I didn't know was that I was just a fill-in — Miles had already made arrangements for Wayne Shorter to join. So after a while I left, and went with Andrew Hill," he explains. "I had the time to stay with Davis? "It probably wouldn't have worked because I was ready to go further than the tradition, and Miles was still in the tradition. He did go avant garde later — a lot of the things Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock were doing were very free. Then with *Bitches Brew*, that was all free music — free in a different way, with the bass and drums being static, holding a rhythm, and everything else above it sort of ethereal, flowing... which was beautiful. It was this idea of playing free but still being totally accessible to the audience — dance music in a sense, dance rhythms but avant garde music... Miles and I stayed good friends all the way. He used to come down to my Studio RivBES and listen to the musicians, though he never played."

Rivers made his belated recording debut as leader, *Fuschia Swing*, in 1984, having landed a contract with Blue Note. But producer Alfred Lion found the current material too difficult, so Fuschia featured music written five years earlier. "That was very complicated music," Rivers explains. "So instead, we recorded material somewhat on the fringe of the cutting edge. It's music that I'm still proud of, of course, but it was something that was part of my past." To put the music in context, Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* was recorded two days before Rivers's date, and Archie Shepp's *Four For Trane* had been recorded two months earlier, while Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch* had just come out. Fuschia may be groove driven, and cool and clear in its approach compared to Coltrane's ecstatic jazz — and less radical than the Rivers Blue Notes that followed. But today it still comes across as completely fresh and compelling, one of the saxophonist's finest achievements. It also features the ballad "Beatrice", written for his wife, the only Rivers composition to become a jazz standard.

The three subsequent Blue Note dates concluded with *Dimensions And Extensions*, recorded in 1987. *Dimensions* is a wild album, but Alfred Lion left the label before its assigned release date and it only surfaced ten years later, coupled with an Andrew Hill date. Earlier tracks have an affinity with the bitter-sweet dissonance of trumpeter Booker Little's compositions from earlier in the decade. But with the "pulse, no metre" track "Effusive Melange", we're into ferocious free jazz, while "Invention" is a remarkable dialogue between Rivers and James Spaulding, both on flutes. "Afflatus", with just tenor, bass and drums, prefigures the trio-based free improv that became Rivers's preferred vehicle over the next decade and more. All four of the crucial Blue Note documents were recently issued in a box set by the US archival label Mosaic.

In 1969, with his wife Bea, Rivers found a loft above a vacated department store in Manhattan, which was in fact owned by Robert De Niro's mother, Virginia Admiral. "Robert Mapplethorpe was on the fourth floor, and there were a lot of other artists in the building at the time," he reminiscences. There, he set up the performance space known as Studio RivBES. It became the focus of the saxophonist's increasing swerve towards free improv. Rivers was not really a loft-scene pioneer — the scene had been happening since several years before — but he was a pivotal organisational figure. He played at RivBES with such figures as Clifford Jordan, Dewey Redman, Frank Lowe, Charles Tyler, Julius Hemphill, Oliver





Laik, Sonny Simmons, Henry Threadgill, Hamiet Bluiett and David S Ware. This influx of creative, technically proficient musicians, according to jazz writer Michael Cuscuna, "shoved a lot of the screaming pretenders off the scene" in favour of a more considered approach to freedom. The studio remained open for ten years, until, according to Rivers, other clubs "got to coming round and stealing the musicians because they could pay more".

Did the players call their music free jazz? "More or less avant garde, I never did call it free jazz then," Rivers declares. "I did play free jazz – on *Streams and Waves*." *Streams* (1973), which appeared on Impulse!, and *Waves* (Tomato 1978) – featured a groove-based but incredibly demanding approach that's been aptly described as "almost stream of consciousness". But then what, according to Sam Rivers, is free jazz, exactly? I presume that he agrees with the history books that Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor were its pioneers, and ask whether he first heard their music live or on record. "I first heard Cecil Taylor live because he was in Boston at the time. I presume that to have been before Taylor's first significant recording in 1956. I first heard Ornette Coleman on record, I first heard Dizzy Gillespie on record, and Charlie Parker – and Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young! It's good that records are there. I'm talking to you because you've heard my records," he laughs. "Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman are completely different. They did try to do something together – it didn't work at all. Their music is as directly theirs. But I can work with both of them, and have in the past... You have to remember that Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman are not free musicians. Cecil Taylor is probably the most disciplined musician that I have ever performed with." Rivers played and recorded with Taylor at different times in the late 60s, most famously on *Nuits De La Fondation Moët* (released on Shandar in 1969). "Everything is pretty much written. You can call him avant garde, but to call him free is a complete misnomer." Surely, "written" for Rivers must mean "starts with a theme", not written on manuscript paper? "I mean written on manuscript paper," he asserts. "Exactly. I still have it! Every musician separately had their own part. But I wouldn't know that if I hadn't been with him. Maybe I'm exposing a secret," he chuckles.

It's perhaps for this reason that Rivers has claimed to be an originator of free jazz, in the sense of not starting with a preconceived idea – though a groove isn't ruled out. "A groove is always part of the music, groove means 'feeling,'" he says. "Free' for me means no preconceived idea, no preconceived melodies or harmonic attitude. You start with a blank slate. If I'm going to play something with changes, that is not free. If I'm going to play something written, that is not free. It may be avant garde, but it's not free. Free doesn't mean you're not prepared – I've worked on all my changes, and all my different technical things, I've left nothing to chance. But when you get out there, it's all chance. Not too many musicians do that. I think I'm one of the few exponents of this kind of really free music. In the real complete sense, 'freedom' means you move from nothing, you are a creator... like God!", he exclaims. But is a blank slate really possible? "Well, if I'm asked 'What are you going to play Sam?', and I reply 'I have nothing planned, I haven't the faintest idea' – that's as blank a slate as I can get. It frightens some musicians. I can do that with the two, we've played a lot together. It was the same with Dave Holland in earlier days."

One of Rivers's most celebrated appearances is on bassist Dave Holland's *Conference Of The Birds* (22 THE WIRE

(ECM, 1972) with Anthony Braxton and Barry Altschul. "Most of [Braxton's] music is very technical," he comments. "I like his saxophone playing. It's not swinging. It's a style reminiscent of Eric Dolphy, and it's very intriguing." It's not a very beautiful sound on saxophone, I suggest. "Well, what is he trying to project?" Rivers responds. "It's hard to know. Some musicians do certain things as an instinct, in a sense. Then there are some artists who want to either force you to listen or turn it off. You can't use it as part of the furniture, as background music. It's in your face."

Rivers also recorded two acclaimed duo albums with Holland in the mid-70s (on Improvising Artists Inc), called simply *Sam Rivers/Dave Holland*. Volumes 1 and 2, and made common cause with other European free improvisors. "The European musical heritage is much broader [than the American]," he states. "Musicians who are into Stravinsky and Schoenberg and Stockhausen can identify with Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman – the parallels are very obvious musically. When I first went to Germany, the German musicians in particular had no problem with the avant garde. Blues and swing were harder than the avant garde for the Europeans."

Rivers is a multi-instrumentalist, principally on soprano and tenor sax, flute and piano. He also has an alto sax. ("I just use it for practising," he notes), bass clarinet and oboe. And he's been an exponent of multiphonic singing for most of his career. How did this extraordinary singing style – rather like Arthur Dayle's, though not modelled on him – come about? "My mother and father had us singing when we were very, very young," he remembers. "I was always in a choir... I developed a talent for multiphonic singing – for humming more than one sound. I didn't really think that much of it, until one time I was doing it in France at this concert, and there were some Africans in the audience. They came up to me and asked, 'What tribe are you from?', because of the kind of sounds I was doing. It was a healing kind of thing, scaring away the devils or something like that. I suppose it's an African tradition, but I've never been to Africa in my life! I'm light-brown skinned, and there's no such thing as a light-brown skinned African, I have as many white cousins as I do black – as most so-called black Americans in this country do."

In the 90s Rivers moved out of New York, to the sunnier climate of Florida. "I was travelling around, touring the States with Dizzy Gillespie, his quintet and his orchestra and the United Nations band," he says. "My wife Beatrice and I, we were looking for a place outside New York, we were tired of the cold. I could have moved to LA, or San Francisco, or Arizona, or New Mexico, any place warm. I talked to some of the musicians that were in Orlando, they were telling me that they just needed something to bring them all together... There are good musicians down there who work for Disney who are sort of trapped with the good money, I say they're trapped, because you've got a mansion and two cars in the garage... for me, that's a lesson not to get trapped by a financial situation where you can't leave – it takes away your freedom." In Orlando he founded a trio with multi-instrumentalists Doug McShears (bass, guitar and bass clarinet) and Anthony Cole (drums, piano and tenor sax) which has now lasted for ten years. Their recent albums, *Concept* and *Firestorm*, are available on Rivers's own *RivBea Sound* label.

Nowadays much of Rivers's time is taken up with composition. "I've been writing since about 1958, constantly," he claims. "Whenever someone calls me for a recording, I have music ready. I'm not going to be sitting in the studio sweating, trying to

get the music together, like a lot of musicians I've recorded with. When anyone commissions me to write a piece, the music is pretty much done already!" Does he think of himself more as a composer than an improviser now? "That's what a composer does, he writes down his improvisations," he says, and he's described his compositions as "backgrounds for improvisors". "Bach was a great improviser, Mozart was a total supreme improvisor, and Beethoven too," he adds.

He's been writing large-ensemble works for many years but the recently released *Inpiration and Cummulation* by The RivBea All-Star Orchestra, with compositions dating from 1968-95, are rare examples on record. Rivers has had compositions performed in their entirety at Lincoln Center and other venues, but the discs feature only segments of them. Recently he's been composing at a feverish pace. "I'm sitting here now with 300 compositions for jazz orchestra, and we play every Wednesday night when I'm in town [in Orlando]," he says. "We use that as a form of paid rehearsal. The musicians are good sight-readers and good improvisors, and I constantly bring in new music."

A new departure was *Horizon On Light And Shadow*, a 1996 album with trombonist Julian Priester and electronic artist Tucker Martine. Priester is a long-time partner who appeared on *Dimensions And Extensions*, and later joined Herbie Hancock's *Sextant* group. Rivers is cautious about combining electronics and improvisation, however. "I've done some things with synthesizer, and things with symphony orchestra with Tucker Martine. I like to do them. But I always considered them experimental performances... I don't really want to go into another heavy duty study. I really am a composer."

His more recent work with pianist Jason Moran recalls the soundworld of Andrew Hill. Listening to Moran's recent *Blue Note* release, the audacious, uncompromising *Black Stanzas*, it's hard to believe there's a 50 year age gap between the principal players. It's been more than 30 years since Rivers's last appearance on *Blue Note*, and the music recalls those glory days of experimentation. Listen to the record and you think he must surely hold the secret to eternal youth. "My mother died at 93, my uncle at 96, I have another uncle who's 105," he explains. "Being a musician, I don't expect to make it that far, though Benny Carter did. He's ninetysomething and still playing. I suppose it's genetic, I've probably done more damage to my body than these relatives – my mother was a very pueril lady."

Of course, his Florida contemporaries are probably out on the golf course. "Well, I don't know any of them!" he exclaims. "I'm about five minutes from a golf course. I go by there, and I feel sorry for those guys... Down here, I don't know anyone past 40. My audience don't dance in their 20s, and it's packed every Wednesday night. I'm playing dance music. People don't dance to the melody, or to the harmonies, all they dance to is the rhythm... You can play anything you want, as long as you have a stable rhythm. That's what Miles Davis and a lot of other musicians did. I'm playing avant garde over the rhythm, and the audiences, they love it... I prepared myself so that if I do make it to this age, I'll be so stufed with themes and harmonic ideas... I have enough unfinished material here to last me another ten years at least. I'll be completely occupied up until whenever it is that I fall asleep." □

Sam Rivers Trio's *Firestorm* is out now on RivBea. The Complete Blue Note Sam Rivers Sessions is available from Mosiac ([www.mosaicrecords.com](http://www.mosaicrecords.com)). The Trio is on tour in the USA in March; see [www.samrivers.com](http://www.samrivers.com) for details. Thanks to Matt Gormey at RivBea Sound, Don Lucoff and Bill Shoemaker for assistance with this feature



## IF YOU THOUGHT TODAY'S POP MUSIC WAS MECHANICAL AND REPETITIVE, WAIT UNTIL YOU ENCOUNTER THE AUTOMATED INHABITANTS OF SAN FRANCISCO'S MUSÉE MÉCANIQUE, ATTENDED BY CURATOR DAN ZELINSKY

WORDS: JASON GROSS

CABINETS OF CURIOSITY: A SELECTION OF 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY COIN-OPS, PLAYER-PIANOS, ORCHESTRIONS AND PROTOTYPE JUKEBOXES KEPT AT THE MUSÉE MÉCANIQUE (OPPOSITE)

# METAL MAN

**A**t the Western edge of San Francisco's Sunset district, at the foot of the sprawling Golden Gate Park overlooking the foggy bay and Ocean Beach, stands the historic Cliff House. Venture into the building and descend two levels below the street, where a bizarre cabinet of curiosities awaits. On entering, you encounter Laughing Sal, a six foot tall paper mache woman with long curly red locks, black-striped apron and gap-toothed smile. For half a dollar, she'll rock back and forth laughing at you like a maniac, just like she once did day after day for 50 years, when she used to hold down a pitch at the old Playland amusement park. Continuing inside, you come across dozens more automated figures, fortune tellers, love tellers, strength testers, photo booths and chromatrons lining two hallways, a large back room and side alcoves. Behind you, a 1912 model Wurlitzer Style B Orchestration beckons you to drop a coin and release its kinetic energies. Essentially the Orchestration is an extended player-piano fitted with strings, bass and snare drums, a rack of flute pipes and a triangle, 'played' by a nail-covered wooden rail connected to a churning piano roll. The coin triggers the sound of turning gears as the motor whirrs into action, ready to regale you with the dulcet melody of "Love's Fancies".

Welcome to the world of the Musée Mécanique, described by its proprietor Dan Zelinsky as "an authentic collection of coin-operated automatic mechanical musical instruments". To the casual observer, they might appear to be mere sideshow novelties, but these 'coin-ops' (as they're technically known) represent a little-known chapter in American music history. Their presence is a reminder that the instrumental inventions of our own time - 808s, 303s, 909s, Cubase, ProTools and other devices - will one day find themselves on history's scrap pile. One hopes that a latencies equivalent of Zelinsky will emerge to document them.

Coin-ops first appeared in the early 1800s as distant ancestors of today's billion-dollar slot machine industry dispensing candies and smokes to paying customers. Things began to change when various entrepreneurs sought other ways to profit from what were essentially mechanical goods dispensers. In the late 19th century, Cincinnati based German immigrant Rudolph Wurlitzer (founder of the company whose organs would jerk a million cinema tears, and later still, whose jukeboxes would become inextricably linked with rock 'n' roll mythology) turned his instrument importing and manufacturing business into an early version of 'music on demand'. By simply attaching coin slots to player-pianos, he precipitated a mad rush to manufacture similar machines around America.

Coin-op companies were self-contained entities, producing every aspect of the machines from

research and development through to casting metal parts and carving the woodwork. Once a prototype was completed, which took about a year, production lines were capable of rolling out 100 models a day. If the demand was there, Christened with such colourful names as the North Tonawanda, the Nelson Wiggins and the Seeburg KT Special, these huge devices were built to withstand the heavy wear and tear of repeat play in family entertainment centres across America.

At the same time, the music business was dominated by song publishing organisations (most notably Tin Pan Alley), in the pre-phonographic age, profits were counted by sheet music sales. For publishers, therefore, it made perfect sense to fill ice cream parlours, shopping centres, restaurants, pizza parlours and dancehalls with programmable machines dispensing the hits of the day, thereby spreading a song's popularity. Once a well-tuned tune was pegged, it was easy to draw in customers willing to feed coins into the machines to hear favourite songs like "Sweet Sue", "Sweet Rose O'Grady", "High School Cadets", "Dizzy Fingers", "Everybody Stomps" and "Don't Give Up The Ship".

Sadly, the march of technology eventually eclipsed these coin-operated contraptions. As early as 1890, Wurlitzer had worked out a way of attaching a coin mechanism to a phonograph, ushering in another new method of delivery: the jukebox. In the 1930s, skyrocketing jukebox sales registered just how far power in the music industry was shifting away from song publishers and towards record manufacturers. Vinyl records - initially created as a means to preserve speeches and reproduce operatic arias - had entered the consumer domain; and once the wireless radio started broadcasting directly into people's homes, it largely took musical entertainment out of the public, social realm into private, domestic space. The days of the coin-op were numbered.

However, their rapidly approaching obsolescence couldn't diminish their appeal for San Francisco native Edward Zelinsky, father of the Musée's current proprietor. Sometime in the 1930s, Zelinsky traded a case of oil he had won at a raffle for a little one-cent penny arcade machine. Immediately smitten, his family and friends pied it with change, and soon he had enough to buy more and more machines. Eventually he had amassed a huge collection. Meanwhile, a local Playland amusement park run by George Whitney had opened an attraction called the 'Musée Mécanique' to exhibit the collection of coins it had built up since the park was inaugurated in the 1900s. Together with George Whitney's son, Zelinsky would trade machines back and forth regularly. Now, Zelinsky's son Dan recalls that his family's basement was filled with coins by the time he was born. Growing up around these

wondrous mechanical marvels, he soon became enchanted with the machines and began to share his father's obsession. When the Whitney family closed the park in the early 70s, the Zelinskys leapt at the chance to take over the Musée, which they moved up the street to its present location.

For going on 30 years, there has been no one to greet visitors at the door. Instead, they might encounter a kindly attendant with a belt full of keys and a name tag reading "I work here". On most days, however, Dan can be found dusting and sweeping, fixing any one of the dozens of machines, or answering questions about the assembled contraptions. Indeed, much of Zelinsky's time and energy is spent on repairs, as the years and the elements have taken their toll on the aging mechanisms. Their condition is exacerbated by the salt air, sand and grime that goes with the museum's oceanside location. The weather is the most unpredictable factor, as changes of humidity affect the loudness of the drums, and the tuning of the pipes and pianos.

But the Musée's thousands of appreciative visitors make the seemingly endless maintenance work worthwhile. "People are walking back into their childhood, playing with the same machines they did years ago," Dan Zelinsky observes. Surely hearing these songs over and over every day for so many years must drive him to distraction? Not at all. "There's so much difference in each tune," he enthuses. "Each one tells a story. They bring back great memories for some people or make new memories for others." With so many coin-ops in one room, interesting combinations of melodies periodically erupt. "A lot of people purposely start them all at the same time. They like that cacophony type of hell."

The instruments' age and frailty, not to mention the logistics, put paid to any dreams of touring these enormous gadgets to different locations around the country. Instead Zelinsky fine-tuned the machines into top working order and hired a recording engineer to tape the automata in their natural environment - complete with the initial coin drop, for strict audio verité - and produced a souvenir CD, *The Zelinsky Collection*. Released by the Musée in 2000, it generated enough demand for a second volume the following year (reviewed in *Outer Limits*, the *Wire* 205). The CDs make valuable historical documents, but you have to experience these gadgets' whirling, clanging performances in the flesh, as it were, to get the full effect of the music. "You see here the evolution of mechanical musical machines," Dan Zelinsky concludes. "There's very few of them on display anywhere anymore. Enough people come in to enjoy it and remember it from their childhood to make it worthwhile to preserve it." □ *Musée Mécanique, 1090 Point Lobos Road, San Francisco, CA 94121, USA. Tel 001 415 386 1170. Website: museumecanique.citysearch.com*

# CUINE MUSIC



THIS MONTH, SONIC YOUTH PRESENT THE ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES FESTIVAL IN LOS ANGELES: A RICH CELEBRATION OF THE UNDERGROUND, OUTSIDER MUSIC NETWORK THEY HAVE CHAMPIONED FOR 21 YEARS. IN OUR 12 PAGE SONIC YOUTH SPECIAL, WE SPEAK TO KIM GORDON, THURSTON MOORE AND LEE RANALDO DURING FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR ATP, AND AS THEY PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES TO A NEW ALBUM AND FILM SOUNDTRACK. ON PAGE 40, WE PRESENT A PRIMER ON ALL SY'S ESSENTIAL RECORDINGS, SOLO WORKS AND SIDE PROJECTS.

INTERVIEW: CHRISTOPH COX

PHOTOS: STEFANO GIOVANNINI

# HELL



**In rock as in real life**, utopia is always just a dream away. No one has put their ideals on the line with as much conviction as Sonic Youth, whose belief in the redemptive power of rock to the test at this month's All Tomorrow's Parties in Los Angeles. When they were handed the curatorship of a high profile event with ATP's clout, they set about putting together a fabulous dream ticket designed after the group's own extremely eclectic tastes. Their formidable line-up takes in free jazz firestarters Cecil Taylor and Fred Anderson; the noise immolations of Merzbow and Pele; the precarious jumprutting of Boredoms and Jackie O Motherfucker; the numbskull nihilism of original Stooges Ron Ashton; the blasted romanticism of Television; the Riot Grrrl glam of Sleater-Kinney and Peaches; the various monotones, drones and silences of Tony Conrad; The Dead C and Kevin Drumm; the digital percussion tapestries of Iküe Mon; plus mighty mouths Lydia Lunch and Cannibal Ox; motorik cruisers Stereolab and much more.

The cement binding this prospective Babel of clashing styles and competing noses is, of course, Sonic Youth themselves. Since their inception 21 years ago they have been laying down communications links across generations, genre lines and even gender/racial divides. They declared their hand straight off, on their first two records, with the Stooges invocations of 'Brother James' and their 'I Wanna Be Your Dog' cover. Through much of the 1980s they kept returning to 1969, the beacon year

of The Stooges, Woodstock, the Manson murders and Altenteam, sifting through the debris as if trying to redeem rock's utopian dream from its traumas. The popularity of 1988's *Daydream Nation* scored them a level of creative freedom they've been fully exploiting ever since by paralleling their major releases with their SYR own-label experimental albums, while individually pursuing their different collaborations with a broad range of musicians not unlike those featured in All Tomorrow's Parties.

Sonic Youth's level of freedom is not only founded on an unprecedented open-ended deal with the Geffen record label, it's dependent on the compact they have made with their audience to blast open purportedly difficult music and share the secret existences of their discoveries with all those who've come with them this far. Sonic Youth would clearly like it to be a two way traffic, but they're aware of the risks inherent in testing the good faith of an expanding rock audience. Their most serious test to date came when, with new member Jim O'Rourke, they toured Goodbye 20th Century, the SYR double set of contemporary composition covers, through Europe last year. A loud dissenting faction in London aside, the mutual trust between Sonic Youth and their followers paid off.

'Meanwhile, the two compatible Sonic Youth songs they included in the set – the first album's "She Is Not Alone", and the recent NYC Ghosts & Flowers track "Side2Side" – let on how they've been communicating with the century's dissonant voices all along.

BIBA KOPF

**How did Sonic Youth get to curate All Tomorrow's Parties?**

Lee Ranaldo: The guy who puts on these shindigs, Barry Hogan, invited us to participate in one of the ATPs in the UK at Cramber Sands, and it was a very special event. The festival started out as an artist-curated event from the very beginning, and that idea appealed to us – that it was a chance for an artist or a group to reflect their sensibilities. And the scene at Cramber Sands was just amazing, kind of like the holiday camp in *Tommy* or something like that. Everyone stayed on the site in these little bungalows, and it was just a really cool scene. One thing led to another, and the last day we were there, Barry popped the question: 'How about you curating one?' Through his further brainstorming, he decided he wanted to try it in the US. We were game to do it. It seemed like a good time for us to attempt to do something like this, where we put our sensibilities on the line. That's always been part of our situation. With our opening acts on tour, we try to pick really creative and interesting musicians and artists. And this was a chance to do that same thing on a larger scale.

Thurston Moore: It's kind of funny that we were asked to curate this festival, because we weren't exactly the most popular act at ATP when we played in. In fact, I think we were probably the least popular of any acts that ever played ATP [laughs]. Our sense of the festival was that it was a forum for bands to experiment with what they do, to try different things that you wouldn't normally do at a rock festival. So we took it upon



ourselves to play this 30-40 minute drone guitar piece that we were really into. When we got there and played it, we thought it was going along very well [laughs]. But after we got offstage, we got a very cold reception from people, you know, like, 'Why did you do that?' Kim Gordon [To Moore] It wasn't entirely like that. It was a 20 minute guitar piece. And then there were some new songs that we played instrumentally that were equally foreign. It wasn't like we went on and jammed for...

TM: No, we didn't jam. We never had the intention of jamming. But we played all this instrumental music. We didn't play anything that was recognisable to anybody who was a Sonic Youth fan. But we thought that was the nature of this festival, to throw out some new ideas. And we were just lambasted. Critically, we were just completely killed by the British newspapers. Some said we were just wasting the audience's time. When they reviewed us in *Melody Maker*, there was a picture from the concert of me playing a guitar behind my head and the caption underneath said, 'Goodbye 20th century, goodbye talent' [laughter]. That was pretty much the response to what we did.

KG: [To TM] You're really exaggerating the whole thing. TM: I don't think I'm exaggerating enough! The *NME* said it was 'shite'.

KG: One of the papers said, 'This is either brilliant, or total crap.' But still they said, 'Vay to the Youth for not giving people what they expect.' The majority of the people there hated it, I'm sure. But the hardcore fans were into it.

TM: I don't remember that. Maybe I'm mythologising the derision.

**Was there a guiding idea behind your curatorial selections for this year's ATP?**

LR: The guiding idea was just, 'Wow, who would we like to invite?' We initially made a communal want list of about 300 different artists that ranged completely far and wide. Some things we knew were long shots, like Dylan or Neil Young or Ornette Coleman. We almost got Neil hooked, because we are kind of friends with him. And, if schedules had been a little different, he might have been able to do it. It basically ended up just coming down to who could make it. Then, after everything that happened with 9/11 and the rescheduling of this event, there had to be some shifts. Actually, I think that allowed us to make the bill even stronger than it was originally.

KG: It's too bad there aren't more girls playing. We tried to get Le Tigre, but...

TM: There were a bunch of women musicians. We were trying to be sort of gender conscious. We were trying to be somewhat culture conscious, too, as far as getting more acts from genres that aren't just middle-class white kids with indie rock bands. But a lot of our scene is just that. Those are our compatriots. So it's fairly heavy in that sort of thing.

**But the programme still represents a pretty big range, from Eddie Vedder and Wilco to Cannibal Ox, Merbow and Cecilia Taylor.**

TM: When Pearl Jam asked us to tour with them [in autumn 2000], none of us were very big Pearl Jam

enthusiasts. But we've known Eddie through the years through mutual friends. During the Pearl Jam tour, sometimes he would go out before us and play a solo acoustic set of two or three songs that he'd been working on. And they were startlingly good.

**The festival was originally scheduled for mid-October of last year, but then was postponed in the aftermath of 11 September. Does the new programme reflect anything of the experience of these events?**

LR: I don't really think so, at this point. We really brainstormed a lot after the 11th. If it was still going to go on in October, we were going to change it around a bit and maybe turn the entire thing into a benefit and memorial concert. But when it got pushed to March, it seemed less pressing to do that. We had already done a big benefit concert of our own in New York, when we curated an evening at the Bowery Ballroom with all the money going to a few different charities. We had Cat Power and Tom Verlaine and some spoken word artists and other things. And we raised quite a good deal of money. So we felt pretty good about that. And then once the shows got pushed to March, we thought it would be better to let things rest as far as all of the September 11 stuff was concerned. We didn't want to make this festival somehow tied to a tragic event. The festival represents a lot of the genres Sonic Youth have been associated with over the years: punk rock, free jazz, minimalism, art noise, experimental electronica, postmodern poetry, etc. But the one thing missing is the kind of modern composition Sonic Youth performed on *Goodbye 20th Century*.



LR: It's true. We were pretty concerned about that kind of balance. We tried to invite a bunch of different people like that. We were talking to Alvin Lucier and James Tenney, at one point. Somehow it proved very difficult to arrange. And, sadly, it is a bit lacking on that end. I guess partly we were trying to put people in a context that would work in the context of this kind of a festival, given that we didn't know the venues or really what was going to happen, we thought that some of those people might be a little sensitive about the kind of audience they got, and that maybe if the audience wasn't as sufficiently respectful of the music... I don't know. A couple of people that we wanted to invite, we couldn't figure out a situation in which we thought they would be happy with the performance options. So, you know, we tried.

#### You toured Europe last summer performing the *Goodbye 20th Century* pieces. How did that go?

LR: We thought it was a great success. You know, there were occasionally crowds that were a little confused. In spite of how heavy the ads pressed what was going to be happening, there were still people who sort of expected that if they showed up they'd hear "Teenage Riot" or whatever, and we weren't doing that stuff! So there were your handful of disgruntled fans in London, that handful was very loud [laughs].

TM: It was like a war in the audience. During the silent parts, like in the Cage piece, you would hear some guy in the back yelling, "This is crap!" And then we'd hear another guy in the front row yelling back, "Why don't you go home, mate!" It was nutty. But almost

everywhere else, all through Europe, it was all very great. We played the Sonar electronic music festival in Barcelona, though, and that was terrible, because it was this raver audience. We were there playing these pieces by early pioneers of electronic music and it felt as if we were at an avant garde jazz festival playing...

KG: Honky tonk.

TM: Yeah, King Oliver or something [laughs].

LR: But, I think, overall, the audiences really liked it. And I think that, at this point, our audience is willing to follow us wherever we might choose to go. We had a lot of fun doing that tour because it really allowed us the possibility of going out and playing this music that we find really interesting, putting it into a context that it's not usually seen in, and exposing a lot of different people to it. We thought the concerts were a great success. We mixed in a few songs in the end – like "She Is Not Alone" [from the first LP, *Sonic Novum*] and *Side2Side* [from 2000's NYC *Giants & Flowers*] – that we felt tied what we do to some of the pieces we were playing. We also incorporated a lot of local performers at every stop on the tour for some of the pieces that needed more than the five of us. So we got to play with a lot of interesting people. Rita in Barcelona, Frederic Rzewski... it was really a blast to do. It's just great to be able to go out and present all this strange music and see that, for the most part, the audience responded to it very well.

#### Was it a stretch to perform that kind of live set?

LR: It wasn't really. It took a few shows to shake out a format and a sequence that worked. But I think we all

felt pretty comfortable playing the actual music. In the first few nights, there was more changing in terms of the way we structured the sets, because there are a few pieces that are very openended. The first few nights, we tried doing them with a very small number of people, so most of us would leave the stage and a different duo or trio would play. As it went on, we found that the people backstage wanted to be out there playing too.

**Do you see *Goodbye 20th Century* as a retrospective tribute and farewell to late 20th century composition? Or do you think of that material as something that still informs your projects?**

LR: For us, it was a kind of acknowledgement of a strain, or a bunch of threads of 20th century music that have been really important to us but that a large part of our audience might not realise is integral to the way we've made music right from the getgo. A lot of us have been doing improvised music for awhile now, but as a group we haven't done that outside of those species within our own music that call for improvisation. So, we did a record store concert in San Francisco 1998 right when we were starting to have a relationship with [Jim] O'Rourke. He wasn't really in the band yet, but he was along on that tour as an opening act. We were invited to do this in-store performance, and we didn't really want to go in and play songs. So we invited Jim and this friend of ours, Will Winitz, a San Francisco percussionist who is really well schooled and versed in that music – he was Cage's percussionist in the last decade of his life. We



did an improvised piece there, and it was out of that experience that we put together the groundwork to make *Goodbye 20th Century*. That record has definitely had a big influence on the way our music has gone since then, or it's allowed us a little bit more freedom in terms of the kind of stuff we've been putting on record. So, yeah, the experience of doing it definitely influenced what we're doing now.

KG: The record got surprisingly good reviews. I mean, we could have just been totally slaughtered.

TM: Its timing was really good, and we didn't really realize that. I think when we first issued the record we thought it was going to be one of the more obscure things we've ever done. And it sold out of its first pressing really quickly.

**I hear that you have a new record in the works?**

LR: Yeah, it's pretty far along. We laid a lot of the groundwork last August, when we were writing pretty much full time every day in the studio. We were on this really great pace to finish the record when September 11 happened, and that sort of shut down the whole neighbourhood, including our studio, for six or eight weeks. It took us a while to pick it back up. And, at this point, we had this other project on its heels, this film soundtrack we just did for this French director. **How did that come about?**

LR: It's a film called *Demonlover* by this French director Olivier Assayas, who, in France, is considered a sort of a young inheritor of the Nouvelle Vague. He did a film in 1996 that got some notice called *Irma Vep*, which used a song of ours. Out of that, he

approached us to do the score for this new film. We've done some film scores in the past and it's always really fun. But it's usually taken the form where they hand you the nearly finished film and say, 'These are the places where we want the music; we want two minutes here, from 8:15 to 10:15', or whatever. That's what happened with the making of the film. Oliver's idea was that he wanted to start working with us before he had even shot a frame of film. So we were sending him rough things that we were doing. He was listening to them and playing them for the actors on the set as they were shooting. And then, each week, he'd send us a reel of that week's dailies. The music we would send would influence his thinking about the soundtrack, and the visuals he would send would then give us more insight into how the movie was going. It was really fun, because it went back and forth like from the very beginning of his shooting schedule. Some of the music is really aggressive and adventurous for a film soundtrack. I think it's gonna be pretty amazing.

KG: We're also just starting to work on a long-term project documenting radical women in music. A local multimedia firm called Titanium phones us after reading a comment I made in *The Wire* (Invisible Jukebox, issue 197) saying 'somebody should make a documentary on women in avant garde music'. TM: We want it to be a visual and aural documentation that gives a sense of history and of the numbers involved. I mean, people know that the world of avant

garde music is really relative to women's creative measures. So we're trying to put all that into some kind of a timeline and make it interesting. We're trying to figure out the best way to present something like this, maybe create a DVD or something that could be presented on public television or could lend itself to an exposition at the Experience Music Project.

KG: We want it to be something that gives a real 3D

sense of the complexity and overlapping of things.

I think it'd be cool to have a room where people could

actually perform scores by Pauline Oliveros or people

like that, to make it accessible. I think it's really great

for kids to be able to have that accessibility, the idea

of making your own music, that's it's not mythologized.

**Can you tell me more about the new record?**

TM: I think we're calling it *Murray Street*, which is where our studio is in Manhattan. I like it because it sounds like Morrison Hotel or Abbey Road.

**Will it reflect the experiences of your *Goodbye 20th Century* material or your various improv projects?**

KG: Not as much on this record as on the last couple of them. This record's really going to song structures. Actually, Thurston wrote most of the songs on acoustic guitar. But they've become these classic rock epics [laughs].

TM: I don't know about that.

KG: It's quite different than the last couple of records.

TM: You know, this is our 21st year, so we're now 'of age'. This is our first adult record [laughs]. All Tomorrow's Parties takes place 14-17 March at Los Angeles UCLA. See Out There for details

# The Primer

**The Wire's bimonthly guide to the essential recordings of a selected artist or genre.**  
**This month: David Keenan explores the frontiers of the experimental rock kingdom of Sonic Youth. Illustration: Savage Pencil**

**They came to raise rock**, not to bury it. Building on groundwork laid by The Velvet Underground, The Stooges, the MC5 and Patti Smith, Sonic Youth have fully articulated the common aesthetic that links such outsider strains as free jazz, avant garde composition, No Wave and teenage rock 'n' roll, all of which had previously seemed self-contained and resolutely non-permeable. While helping fuel an international alternative rock community, from the bastard horse of post-hardcore groups like The Butthole Surfers, Pussy Galore and Big Black to stadium-hopping Lollapalooza punks, Kim Gordon, Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Steve Shelley and recently joined bassist Jim O'Rourke continue to push their unique vision ever forwards, drawing sustenance and inspiration from countless diverse musical strains.

Sonic Youth have always been quick to refute any notion of being anything other than a contemporary rock outfit, aligning themselves early on with the burgeoning American hardcore movement more than the downtown art scene, despite their roots lying firmly in the latter via their links with No Wave. Glenn Branca's guitar ensembles and Gordon's experience contributing to Artforum. Yet their working strategies were largely intuitive, with the group having no official exposure to the Rosetta Stone of experimental music theory and practice. "When I first tried to play Thurston jazz records," Gordon told Rob Young back in The Wire 197, "he wouldn't have anything to do with it. All he would listen to was hardcore." Their use of prepared guitars, alternative tunings and other 'non-musical' sound sources was born out of an intense, almost reverential approach to rock's freakout potential. The base elements of their music appear relatively simple; they burl largely from straightforward rock rhythms, with Shelley's drums providing a solid anchor from which the guitars spin out into explosive peaks or clangorous dross. All this underpins Gordon's, Moore's and Ranaldo's distinctive, undulating vocals, whispering/singing/screaming lyrics ranging from ironic commentaries on pop culture icons to hallucinatory images of totemic power. SY's devotion to rock has spawned a preternaturally amorphous amplification of all they believed it stood for.

Contemporary music thrives on invigorating, unforeseeable paradigm leaps; whether it's Krautrock groups like Can finding liberation in the psychedelic depths of "I Am The Walrus", or Karp Hano hearing a new world in the buzz of the amps during the dying minutes of Big Cheezer's "Second Time Around", it's as if a portal opens for a second and only those who are really listening see the opportunity to leap right through it. Sonic Youth's portal came both from No Wave's refusal - Lydia Lunch's squealing, anarctic slide guitar - and hardcore's burn out - the way guitarist Greg Ginn would extend Black Flag tracks into tough instrumental workouts.

Sonic Youth also give the lie to the old myth inevitably perpetrated by writers and musicians who don't share anything like the same degree of obsession for their subject that record collectors never make good musicians. By dint of their slavish devotion to the cause, collectors can make the best musicians. Sonic Youth's insatiable enthusiasm for contemporary manifestations of refusepunk sound has

meant that they have long enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with music's fringe zones. They've championed avant groups like New Zealand's The Dead C and New York's No-Neck Blues Band - both of whom have further explored routes first signposted by SY - while also enjoying a fruitful dialogue with the mainstream, signing to Geffen in 1989 and bringing dissonance and freedom to stadiums around the world through their relationship with groups like REM and Nirvana. Indeed, their evangelical zeal spills over into the running of several of their own labels dedicated to making available the kind of oddball beauty that would otherwise slip through the cracks. Moore's Ecstatic Peace! imprint has documented everyone from outsider saxophonists like Arthur Doyle and Frank Lowe through Karthaus Stockhausen to New Zealand droneurs like RST and Birchville Cat Motel, while Shelley's Smells Like Records has focused on the esoteric American beauty of songwriters Tim Foljahn, Lee Hazlewood and Cat Power. Besides their label activities, all the members of Sonic Youth are involved in countless side projects and offshoots, dueling with first generation European improvisors, trading tapes with bedroom punk infidels and going head-to-head with the new generation of turntablists and laptop operators. Whatever they're tackling, they do it with a healthy irreverence, proving that rock made by intelligent, culturally literate musicians needn't be a terminally po-faced proposition.

## THE COACHMEN FAILURE TO THRIVE

NEW ALLIANCE NAR025 12"

## GLENN BRANCA SONGS 77-79

ATLANTIC ALP004 CD

## SYMPHONY NO 1 (TONAL PLEXUS)

ROIR R00200648 CD

Thurston Moore's first group, The Coachmen, offer few clues to Sonic Youth's future. Still, their folk-primitive sound, with nods to The Modern Lovers and Television, is invigorating enough to be more than just an historical curiosity. The Coachmen were the brainchild of future beatnik artist and illustrator JD King. In Christmas 1976 King bumped into Moore over a Velvet Underground bin in a used record store out in Providence, Rhode Island. They eventually came together as The Coachmen after the two of them hooked up in New York in 1977. Their sound was primitive even by the amateurish standards of the day - indeed they had to give up the idea of covering The Modern Lovers' "She Cracked" because they couldn't figure out the chords. The archival recordings gathered on Failure To Thrive date from 1979 and sound closest to teenage post-punk groups like Orange Juice or even Josef K. With Moore's lead guitar pealing off the cutest melodic British invasionsisms, only King's surreal, deadpan vocals marked them off as post-Velvets New Yorkers. The Coachmen gigged irregularly at loft parties, bars and, most significantly, CBGBs, where the group once shared a bill with keyboard-heavy new wave group The Fucts, featuring Lee Ranaldo. Through The Coachmen, Moore also got to meet Kim Gordon, when she attended their penultimate gig. At the time she was playing guitar in CKM, a trio including

Stanton Miranda who was also involved with Rhys Chatham, an avant composer experimenting with mangled guitar ensemble pieces, and Christine Hahn, who played with another future guitar orchestra composer, Glenn Branca, in The Static.

At the time Branca was also part of Theoretical Girls, a quartet featuring future Sonic Youth producer Wharton Tiers. But it was The Static who provided the closest blueprint for the early Sonic Youth sound. The Static were a three piece whose line-up was completed by artist Barbara Ess (whose Radio Guitar album with Peggy Ahwesh has just been released on Moore's Ecstatic Peace! label - see The Wire 216). Their only single, "My Relationship"/"Don't Let Me Stop You", included on the Theoretical Girls/Static compilation Songs 77-79, is a pummeling suite of sonophytic klang, which utilises the kind of highly percussive guitar sound that Sonic Youth would later deploy on pieces like "The World Looks Red" and "I'm Insane". Even this early on, Branca was experimenting with altered tunings and bombastic guitar instrumentals, which he later expanded into "hard rock symphonies" such as Symphony No 1 (Tonal Plexus). For the performances captured by ROIR, recorded in July 1981, Branca assembled a 16 piece guitar army, augmented by horns, keyboards and percussion, whose ranks included Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo alongside Barbara Ess and Wharton Tiers. Despite its symphonic title, it's a barbaco rock noise, especially in its first movement, which marnes the juggling momentum of Neu! and La Dusseldorf with Heavy Metal mania. Branca used to cite Mahler and Aerosmith as his main influences back then. You can hear what he meant.

## SONIC YOUTH

## SONIC YOUTH

NEUTRAL NEUTRAL LP

## SONIC DEATH

BLAST FIRST BTFP02 CO

As well as playing cupid to guitarists Moore and Ranaldo, Glenn Branca, in his role as Neutral label boss, also midwifed Sonic Youth's first record. At this stage they were a quartet with Moore and Ranaldo on guitar, Gordon on bass and drummer Richard T Edison (better known today as an actor, with parts in Stranger Than Paradise and Spike Lee's Do The Right Thing). The Neutral label evolved a scuzzy downtown NYC aesthetic epitomised by Swans' savage first album, Fith. Over the winter of 1981-82, Sonic Youth recorded a slew of freshly penned songs which they had never played out before. It showed. Producing themselves, the guitars are slightly naked without the treetraining fields of dissonance that would soon characterise their work. However the Sonic Youth basics were already intact even this far back. "I Dreamed I Dream" is an embryonic version of the haunting monologues that Gordon would often front, only here Ranaldo doubles up on backing vocals, effecting a beautifully sung counterpoint. "The Burning Spear" prefigures Moore's way of combining a gush of free associated images and connoting, atomist guitar lines, often to extremely disturbing effect. But the live Sonic Death is the most essential artefact of early Youth. Originally a home cassette, which launched Moore's Ecstatic Peace! label, its collage of live freakouts, skuzzy home tapes,



# The Primer

audience abuse and inane conversations at once document and prophesy the excited, puzzled and sometimes hostile reception the group's raw tonalities met in their early years. Songs are announced and then abruptly faded or sped up on wonky tapes, while explosive rifts cut to arguments about hamburgers. Between the wise cracks there are moments where the group collides with torrential force, highlighted by a live version of "Early American", from 1983's *Kill Yr Idols EP*, where Gordon sounds lost and dazed, her voice carving icebergs from the static, while Moore and Ranaldo light up the night with phosphorescent aural sparks.

## SONIC YOUTH CONFUSION IS SEX

NEUTRAL NEUTRAL LP  
BAD MOON RISING

BLAST FIRST BFP11 CD

The contemporary Sonic Youth sound first flamed into being in 1983's *Confusion Is Sex*. Lyrically scarred with grotesque images of sadism, body horror and dystopian death, the album marked a descent into some dark places, from which they finally flew clear five years later with *Daydream Nation*. Their aesthetic was at its most punk here, meaning track lengths err on the shorter side. But looking back, some of its most interesting moments are pieces thought of as minor at the time, even as they devastatingly illustrate the efficacy of their newly devised alternate tunings. The primatively recorded album closer, "Lee Is Free", is a minimalist metallic symphony consisting of stretched steel strings played percussively to generate endlessly overlapping concentric patterns. Gordon's half chanted, half sung "Protect Me You" is an emotionally exasperated proto-choral landscape. Reputedly recorded in the walk-in freezer of a deli near the studio, "Freezer Burn" is the sort of mite high-wif of muzzy feedback that would launch a thousand space rockers despite the shock intrusion midway through, when it erupts into a lo-fi live take of The Stooges' "I Wanna Be Your Dog". But rockers like "Inhuman", with its scything monomaniac guitars, pack the biggest visceral punch. The album's uniquely mucky sound was caused in part by a can of coke, which was accidentally spilled over the master tapes.

Sleeked in stunning American Gothic artwork that sets a flaming pumpkin head against a Manhattan skyline, 1985's *Bad Moon Rising* is where Sonic Youth really start to stretch out. It's very much a studio record, with tracks segueing into each other on warped Möbius strips of guitar noise. *Bad Moon Rising* also marks the beginning of their interest in pop cultural autopsy with its inclusion of the "Death Valley '69" single, a demurely duet between Moore and Lydia Lunch that evokes the spiral of insanity that culminated in Charles Manson's apocalyptic murders in California. More significantly, the song allows the contours of their nestling guitars to shape the logic of the arrangement. From here on in, the structure and mood of each track is determined by the physics and physiology of the guitar: how it's strung, string gauge, what tuning it holds the best, and so on. Fortunately you don't have to conquer tonal theory to dig the resulting compositions. More organic and amorphous, they forsake conventional verse/chorus forms in favour of a dialectic of expansion and contraction. Besides, *Bad Moon Rising* is where Sonic Youth started going off in earnest. Moore's stammered intro to "Justice Is Might" is an early incarnation of his Royal Tuff Titty persona, and Ranaldo's use of tapes is startlingly effective, especially when a snatch of The Stooges' über-teenage anthem, "Not Right", nips through his amp.

## SONIC YOUTH WALLS HAVE EARS

NOT RECORDED NUMBER 32LP

EVOL

BLAST FIRST BFP14 CD

SISTER

BLAST FIRST BFP15 CD

Regardless of its dubious provenance, *Walls Have Ears*, aka *Blood On Brighton Beach*, is a fantastic audio documentary of Sonic Youth's autumn 1985 UK tour, culminating in a "Winter Beach Party" in November on Brighton's freezing shore. Reviewing that event for the UK rock weekly *Sounds*, Edin Powney vividly described it as a "witches' Sabbath, with the group struggling to cope with the elements before circles of bedraggled punters huddled around tiny bonfires. The set is violently energetic, with "Making The Native Scene" (then retitled "Blood On Brighton Beach") sounding like Blue Cheer tackling Sammy Hagar's "Bad Motor Scooter". But the majestic "Expressway To Yr Skull" is the highlight. It is at once a rapturously beautiful song and declaration of musical freedom, where Moore's celebratory, quasi-cosmic sea imagery ("We're gonna fly the exploding head in the milkmaid maidenhead/We're gonna find the meaning of feeling good/And we're gonna stay there as long as we think we should") is offset by the howling air raid sirens ripped from Ranaldo's guitar "prepared" with drumsticks and screwdrivers wedged beneath the strings, before the track trails off into infinity on the back of tapped out harmonics. Somewhat speaking, it blew open the sunlit cavities of many future guitar-bliss seekers. The Dead C's Bruce Russell, for one, claims it runout jam alone inspired him to make music, citing his first *Corpus Hermeticum* label Xpressway.

Retitled "The Crucifixion Of Sean Penn" or "Madonna, Sean And Me", a studio version of "Expressway" closes the original vinyl version of their 1986 album *EVOL*. The album was trailed with a single version of "Starpower", the group's wicket first stab at bubblegum, but it's in no way indicative of the rest. EVOL hummed phonetics and dynamics on their head with a series of psychotically forbidding songforms animated by the chittering human howls drawn from Moore and Ranaldo's long-suffering guitars. EVOL was also Sonic Youth's first State-side release on SST, the premier American hardcore label (Black Flag, Minutemen, etc) whose militant rock work ethic inspired Moore and co to get in the van. But, for all Moore's hardcore sympathies, Sonic Youth's music was already a world away from the muscular asceticism that characterised much of SST's output. Highlights include "Marilyn Moore", a pentagonal sludge that combines the clank of midnight trains with an early lonesome ambience; Gordon's somnambulant Hitchcock tribute "Shadow Of A Doubt"; and an early Kerouac-inspired road monologue from Ranaldo, "In The Kingdom #19", which Moore sabotages with a firework thrown at a clearly terrified Ranaldo in mid-song. EVOL also marked drummer Steve Shelley's Sonic Youth debut, in place of Bob Bert. Tight and fairly controlled, Shelley wasn't an immediately obvious choice, at least not until you realise how well his percussion thicks serve as a homing beacon throughout the group's wildest extrapolations.

Repeatedly intended as a concept album based on visionary sci-fi author Philip K. Dick's writings, *Sister* (1987) is a much harder record. Sonic Youth jumpstart garage punk's covenant stance by crosshitting it with alternate tunings and bursts of abstruse white noise. Mostly recorded live in an all-tube studio, Sister is the closest they've got to replicating the Sonic Youth live experience. Aggressively cranked guitar leads ("I Got A Catholic Block") locomotive intensity; Gordon's

hallucinogenic "Beauty Lies In The Eye" sounds like a dream beamed across centuries. But the rockers really define the set, especially the euphonically raging "White Cross" and the derailed cover of "Hot Wire My Heart", originally recorded by San Francisco murder punks Crime. Sister stands as the greatest rock 'n' roll record of the '80s ~ if that isn't a contradiction in terms.

## SAUTER/DIETRICH/MOORE

BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD

FORCED EXPOSURE FED15 CO

LEE RANALDO

FROM HERE TO INFINITY

BLAST FIRST BFP15 CD

HARRY CREWS

NAKED IN GARDEN HILLS

BLAST FIRST BFP16 CD

"We never considered ourselves as being 'out of tune' ~ Thurston Moore told an interviewer from the British TV arts programme *The South Bank Show* in 1989. "Out of standard tuning, maybe, but we think it's bolstering the tradition of rock to break out and freak with it... so to speak." "Freaking with it" brought the group to a creative juncture arrived at by players from parallel disciplines like free jazz, sound art and modern composition. Happily the Sonic Youth constellations encouraged group members to go out and explore new links. Moore's earliest and most rewarding investigations of instant composition were undertaken in the company of two horn-blowing thirds of *Bohème magia*, New York's neatest soft jazz trio. The results are belowowing. Moore swings the great black weight of his muckadelic guitar as a deep, almost rhythmic backdrop for Jim Sauter and Con Ovnick's seething foyhorns. The sleeve notes by "Thomas Psycho" succinctly sum it up: "Two free men met a slave. Everyone goes home barefoot. Right fuckin'-on."

Ranaldo's 1986 vinyl sound art piece, *From Here To Infinity*, features 13 minute-long, locked-groove tracks designed for maxims'/minimalist deconstruction. Ranging from beautiful electronic whitespace through low level hums to some pure turntablism that anticipates his collaborations with avant turntablist Christian Marclay, it almost outdoes Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* in terms of alienating夷yfication. If you can't find an original pressing, the Ranaldo compilation, *East Jesus* (Aristivis ALP36 CD), includes a couple of examples, along with early live material, singles and a bonus track taken from the same home-taping sessions that produced *Confusion Is Sex's* "Lee Is Free". Kim Gordon, meanwhile, formed the shortlived no Harry Crews with Lydia Lunch on guitar/vocals and professional wrestler Sade Mae on drums. Their declared intention was to promote the work of author Harry Crews, a tough-assed chronicler of Southern life on the skids. Their crushing noise guitar and banshops made them highly persuasive apostles of the Crews cred. Appropriately enough, Gordon aggressively projects her voice, stripping it of its nattone quality, as she begins to mould the rocker persona soon to be unveiled on *Daydream Nation*.

## CICCONE YOUTH

THE WHITEY ALBUM

BLAST FIRST BFP18 CD

SONIC YOUTH

MASTER=DIK

BLAST FIRST BFP19 CD

SY alter-ego Ciccone Youth's détournement of Madonna's "Into The Groove" paralleled similar Oedipus-esque desecrations by the likes of Negativland and Culture Club. But with Sonic Youth it's always hard to tell whether their referential embrace is ironic pastiche or affectionate tribute. Their appetite for trashy pop

TOP:  
EARLY  
BLAST  
FIRST  
PRESS  
SHOT,  
CIRCA  
1995.  
BOTTOM:  
SONIC  
YOUTH'S  
GUITAR  
COLLECTION  
PHOTOGRAPHED  
IN  
1995.  
MOST  
OF  
THESE  
INSTRUMENTS  
WERE  
LOST  
IN  
A  
BURGLARY  
FROM  
THEIR  
TOUR  
VAN  
SEVERAL  
YEARS  
LATER



PHOTO: GUY MARSHAL; MICHAEL PRINCIPATO/R

# The Primer

culture in all its manifestations, which by this time had overtaken their interest in American Gothic, renders the dividing line between overground and underground null and void. They exist with a foot in both, as likely to hook up with REM as Prince Decay. Their obsession with Ms Ciccone dates back to EVDL (check "Madonna, Sean And Me"), but it was former Minuteman and Madonna fan Mike Watt who suggested forming a Madonna covers outfit. His contribution to 1988's *The Whitey Album* is a functional, straightforward take of "Burnin' Up", but the Youth single, "Into The Groove", is a crude, fantastic karaoke job – a two moustache on an Athena poster – with Moore singing along to the original Madonna cut through an overloaded mix while a crunching fuzz guitar doubles up on the changes.

*The Whitey Album* takes this cheap methodology even further, with Gordon's karaoke version of Robert Palmer's "Addicted To Love" (for which a video was shot in a booth in Macy's Department Store, New York). Sonic Youth's fanish enthusiasms have always taken them on some fruitful detours. As given away by the outsized sneaker footprint on the inside sleeve, *The Whitey Album* was seeded by their love of Hip-Hop. Most tracks utilise simple, thudding drum machine patterns over which the guitarists layer waves of interference. It's a conceptually deranged as Faust's collage work, *The Faust Tapes*, and even includes a Krautrock tribute, "Two Cool Rock Chicks Listening to Neuf", which is exactly what it says. And Moore's Royal Tuff Titty persona supplies the funniest and lamest spontaneous freestyling this side of Al G.

The cheap-looking 12", *Master-Dix* (1987), now available on the CD of *Sister*, was an early prototype of *The Whitey Album*. Its A side crosses Break Machine with Eddie Van Halen guitar courtesy Dinosaur Jr's J Mascis, while Moore bugs up his NYC turf. Cut up in a Janitor Nurse With Wound style, the second side is even better, with a poguesy cover of The Ramones' "Beat On The Brat" segueing into lo-fi sound pieces, rehearsal jams, random impersonations (Sun Ra, Sonny Sharrock, Max Roach and George Benson turn up on guitar and vocals) and more dad rapping.

## SONIC YOUTH DAYDREAM NATION

BLAST FIRST BTRP924 CD

GOO

CDTHER7598624991 CD

With 1988's *Daydream Nation*, Sonic Youth made huge inroads into the popular consciousness, largely on the strength of its anthemic opening track, "Teenage Riot", which features a great riff and frenetic ultra-slack Thurston Moore lyrics: "It'd take a teenage riot to get me out of bed right now" (apparently inspired by the terminal apathy of Dinosaur Jr's J Mascis). But something about *Daydream*'s production stops me returning to it so often; it simply blunts the chisaw edges of the guitars, leaving them sounding weaker than the preceding *Sister*. But there are exceptions: the "Kissability Trilogy" (every double album's got to have one), where Gordon's snotty, lung-straining vocal runs up against Moore and Randal's big crunching downstrokes; and the great, wired "Silver Rocket" once again recalls Crème. More importantly, *Daydream Nation* establishes Randal as Sonic Youth's most consistent songwriting voice, with tracks like "Rain King", which marries a psychadelic West Coast melody with explosive sonic breakdowns. Caught up in the first stirrings of the Seattle rock explosion sweeping America, they split a single with Seattle Grunge quartet Mudhoney, recording the latter's cloying anthem, "Touch Me, I'm Sick", while Mudhoney returned the favour with a version of Sly's "Halloween". They also took on Mudhoney as support act for their

*Daydream Nation* tour, which produced some of the straightest rocking shows of their career. It paid off when Geffen signed them to an unusually artist-friendly deal that has left them free to work outside the label confines. Further, invited to act in an unofficial A&R capacity, the group recommended Geffen sign Nirvana.

They made a triumphant major label debut with *Go* (1990). Sharper sounding and more varied in attack, it works where *Daydream Nation* failed, with plenty of 'for the hell of it' guitar pyrotechnics and liberal doses of gonzo humour. Randal's "Mole" is the album highlight, and that's not just because he forsakes his usual semi-spoken approach to really sing it. It's a dramatic psychodrama that accelerates into the kind of locked noise that permeated *From Here To Infinity*. The first single, "Kool Thing", features Public Enemy's bemused Chuck D, who marries a half-hearted "Tell it like it is!" in reply to Gordon's demands that he "liberate us from male, white corporate oppression". They go public with their Carpenters obsession on "Tuniz (Song For Karen)", which makes great understated use of Randal and Moore's increasingly melodic string work. They went on to cut a gilty cover of "Superstar" for The Carpenters tribute album, *If I Were A Carpenter* (A&M), but here they channel messages from Karen In Heaven, where she's playing the drums again and hanging with Elvis and Janis Joplin. They originally cut *Go* with Don Reming of Gumball and J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr; that version was certainly deeply punk, but on balance the crackling clarity and teenage/glam feel of the released mix is exactly how it should be.

## WILLIAM HOOKER

SHAMBALLA

KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW181 CD

## WILLIAM HOOKER/ CHRISTIAN MARCLAY/LEE RANALDO

BOUQUET

KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW064 CD

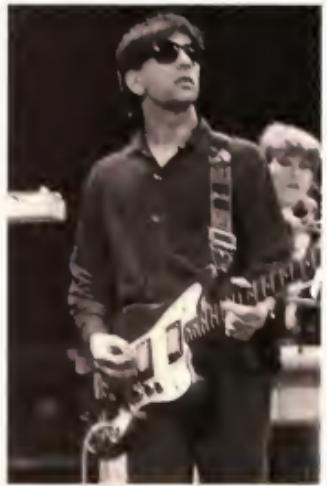
## THURSTON MOORE WITH TOM SURGAL KLANGFARBEN/MELODIE

CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES011 CD

One of the major catalysts in Thurston Moore's wholehearted conversion to New York avant garde and Improv was his encounter with William Hooker, a free drummer who first came to prominence during the New York's second wave in the 1970s. He reappeared in '93 with *The Firmament/Fury* (Silkheart), but it was his sextet album, *Subconscious*, released on Moore's Ecstatic Peaceful label, that brought home the spiritual and emotional power of free jazz to a whole new generation. Mixing intense bursts of linear proto-rock propulsion with splurges of multi-directional temporal defiance, Hooker makes a well equipped sparring partner for Moore and Randal. On '93's *Shambala*, a series of duets with Moore and avant guitarist Elliott Sharp, the starting vectors of Moore's freeform guitar recall the swirling effervescent streams of John Coltrane's interstellar tenor sax. Hooker starts off holding down tight rhythmic shapes until Moore ditches the riffs for sound textures, freeing up Hooker to pilot them all the way out. Even as the context requires him to subtly reconfigure his vocabulary, Moore's distinctive guitar is instantly recognisable.

For his *Bouquet* date with Hooker and Christian Marclay, recorded in 2000, Randal augments his arsenal with chains of bells and electronic devices, but again his guitar work is what really stands out, though the way he and Marclay relate sonically sometimes makes it difficult to work out who's doing what. Hooker, however, is in his element, and with no one willing to settle the pulse, he gets plenty of opportunity to stretch his vertical logic to the max.

TOP:  
LEFT:  
TD:  
RIGHT:  
LEE  
RANALDO  
PLAYS  
WITH  
GLENN  
BRACCA'S  
ORCHESTRA,  
LONDON  
RIVERSIDE  
THEATRE,  
1983;  
KIM  
GORDON  
IN  
ACTION,  
MID-90S;  
THURSTON  
MOORE  
ONSTAGE  
AT  
TIBETAN  
FREEDOM  
CONCERT,  
1997;  
BELOW:  
SOVEREIGNS  
OF  
THE  
DAYDREAM  
NATION;  
PUBLICITY  
SHOT,  
1988



# The Primer

Tracking Ranaldo and Moore's extramusical activities is a near impossible task, but it's exactly this kind of energy and openness to new situations that feeds back into Sonic Youth and keeps them sharp. In addition to Hooker, Moore has kept himself loose by playing with saxophonist Evan Parker (*The Promise on Material Sonor*), more than once with Loren MazzaCane Connors (MMMR), also featuring Ranaldo and guitarist Jean-Marc Montere, on *Numero Zero* Audio, is the pick of the bunch). DJ Spooky (*Riddim Warfare on Outpost*) and guitarist Neil Cline (*In-Store* on Father Yod). He has also cut some powerful sides with his regular sparring partners, the avant percussionists William Winant and Tom Sursil. *Klangfarbenmeide*, his duo set with Sursil, is one of the best. Recorded live in 1995, there's a nice slurred quality to the sound, with Moore alternating chugging clouds of sonic debas and screaming bursts of feedback, while the Shiva-like Sursil launches great firebombing runs on his kit.

## SONIC YOUTH

4 TUNNA BRIX  
Geffen 60091 LP

## FREE KITTEN

SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION  
Kill Rock Stars KRS207 CD

## LEE RANALDO

DIRTY WINDOWS  
Barcino BAX017 CD

## TWO DOLLAR GUITAR TRAIN SONGS

Smells Like Sludge CD

As one of the great covers groups, Sonic Youth were often the sole reason to pick up any of the tatty titbit albums scattered through the 1990s. Their version of Neil Young's "Computer Age" on *The Bridge* (Caroline), sung by Lee Ranaldo, is a great example of their alchemical ability to turn shit into shiny gold, as is the ragu glory of their "Within You Without You" on *The Beatles* tribute *Sergeant Pepper Knew My Father* (a compilation released with the NME). But they've yet to top the John Peel session they cut at Maida Vale in 1989, which consisted mostly of relocking Fall covers and released here as *4 Tunna Brix*. Their railroading take on "My New House" stretches to eight minutes. Elsewhere they drive through hurricane punk versions of "Rowthe Rumble" and "Psycho Mafia," throwing in as many Mark E. Smithisms as possible.

A licentious cover of Serge Gainsbourg's "Teenie Weenie Boppe" opens *Free Kitten*'s 1997 fun garage punk session, *Sentimental Education*. Kim Gordon formed *Free Kitten* after seeing *Royal Trux* on stage, and being blown away by the purity of their non-standard rock line-up. Here she's joined by Julie Caffin, formerly of NYC sour rockers Pussey Galore and STP, Mark Ibold of Pavement, and Yoshimi of Japanese noise contortionists Boredoms. *Free Kitten* take the gasoline growl of early Royal Trux and mess it up with cops from The Shaggs and the international pop underground. The highlight is Iblitz whizkid DJ Spooky's staking intervention, "DJ Spooky's Spatialized Chinatown Express Mix," which sounds like the entire album run through a cement mixer.

Outside of Ranaldo's extramusical noise work, he's also written lots of spontaneous prose, mostly in the form of tour journals, that speaks in a language as personal as his hero Jack Kerouac's (Ranaldo also helped assemble the Kerouac tribute album, *Kicks Like Darkness*, and arranged parts of the music for Kerouac's archival *Reads On The Road*, both released by Rykodisc). Ranaldo's best spoken word collection, *Dirty Windows* (1989), finds him out searching for "hard facts on the highway," his yellowed reeds of

memory underscored with musical colour from Michael Morley of *The Dead C*, the late Epic Soundtracks and SY comrades Steve Shelley and Thurston Moore. You also get a great illustrated travelogue, "Notebook," on *Amanio Ramp* (1998, Starlight Furniture Company) but it's trumped by the title track, which is the sound of steel angel wings circling on tiny puffs of feedback.

Where Ranaldo takes to the road, *Two Dollar Guitar* ride the rods on the transcontinental instrumental album *Train Songs*. Normally *Two Dollar Guitar* is a vehicle for the outsider songs of singer/songwriter Tim Foye. Here, with Smells Like bass Steve Shelley on drums, the group musically evoke the desert expanse of Neil Young at his most electrifying with sleepy pre-rock Americans and the clank of old signal boxes in a paean to stations long since left off the map.

## SONIC YOUTH

WASHING MACHINE  
Geffen 6009223 CD

## A THOUSAND LEAVES

Geffen 6009303 CD

## NYC GHOSTS & FLOWERS

Geffen 4505953 CD

On its release, 1992's *Dirty Album* for Geffen seemed a logical consolidation of Sonic Youth's increasingly structured approach to noise. Listening back, you can hear how its slightly anaemic quality heralded a small creative slump. If Ranaldo's "Wish Fulfillment" still sounds great and Kim's "Drunken Butterfly" explodes out of the gate, their arrangements for "Sugar Kane" and the "100%" single are distressingly ordinary. Caught up in a heavier touring schedule, it sounded like they were deliberately writing songs with stadium scale dynamics, operating under the illusion that a slightly airbrushed finish was all it took to smuggle their avenir leanings past the Pearl Jam fans and into the popular psyche. Experimental, Jet Set, Trash And No Star (1994, Geffen) was even more disappointing, despite their avowed intention to make a punk-romance record in the wake of the last few Geffen sides. By this point Kurt Cobain's suicide had effectively ended the alternative rock honeymoon launched by the phenomenal success of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit." Perhaps the dawning realisation that Sonic Youth had probably reached their maximum audience potential anyway freed them up psychologically once more. Now unburdened by upwardly curving career concerns, they got back on course with *Washing Machine* (1995). The sidelong jam "The Diamond Sea" recalls the great, blasted architecture of "Expressway To Ti Shull."

Another factor in their turnaround was Sonic Youth building their own studio and establishing their own label, SYR, as a repository for any material that was too extreme for Geffen to handle. Their SYR run of releases has also turned out to be an ingenious way of documenting work in progress. No longer having to watch the clock forced Kim Gordon up to return to guitar, and her playing on *A Thousand Leaves* (1998) revitalises Sonic Youth's guitar attack. She admits to not being as well versed in the language of improvisation as Moore and Ranaldo, and her playing feels all the freer for its lack of any conscious reference points. On the opening "Contre Le Sexe," her lugubrious vocal harks back to the austere half-light of "Early American," as the guitars shower the track with tentative sparks or cloak it in low level murmur, while Steve Shelley sounds like he's sorting boxes at the bottom of a tunnel. The spindly intricacy of the guitars, and the group's attention to sonic minutiae make parts of *A Thousand Leaves* sound much like Tom Verlaine's original *Television* blueprint.

garage punks with an ornate take on Albert Ayler's *Spirual Unity*.

Expanding the expressive possibilities of this new, specifically detailed approach paid off in droves on *NYC Ghosts & Flowers* (2000). "Renegade Princess" is a great two-chord punk number that sounds like plugged Modern Lovers led by a teen-gang tough, before fading into forlorn nippies of damaged guitar. The album even has some discernible lead lines, most bewitchingly on Gordon's "Nevermind (What Was It Anyway?," with a snaking guitar sounding little nursery-music note patterns throughout. The opening notes to the title track, lightly struck from a couple of open strings, send shivers down your spine. Then Ranaldo narrates one of his most affecting monologues, while the group tentatively build chords into a massive throb that recalls the Kosmische music of Manuel Gottsching's *Ash Ra Tempel*.

## SONIC YOUTH

GOODBYE 20TH CENTURY

8914240 CD

## KIM GORDON/IKUE MORI/DJ OLIVE SYR 8914253 CD

Brought in as wild card producer for *NYC Ghosts*, avant all-rounder Jim O'Rourke has since been inducted as Sonic Youth's new bass player. Their relationship flowered during an earlier collaboration that became the third SYR EP release. His bass role allows Gordon's guitar playing to come to the fore in a move that has made Sonic Youth's sound slightly less aggressive and more introverted. Recorded in 2000, Gordon's two date with Ikue Mori (box drummer with No Wavers DNA, now with a string of excellent experimental drum machine releases on Tzadik) and DJ Olive is a series of meticulous electronic improvisations positioned somewhere between Los Angeles Free Music Society esoterica, straight-faced IRCAM squelch and the kind of early electronica experiments Rough Trade and Mute used to release. Gordon sings like a cut-up, obsessing over repetitive loops of almost infinite significance punctuated by little perfunctory guitar strums and judicious rhythmic burps. Mori's lush atmospheres create a sense of deep, silent space inside which every movement glows with obsessive detail.

Bidding farewell to the utopian experiments that motivated 100 years of avant-garde composition, Sonic Youth's "covers" album, *Goodbye 20th Century*, has a strangely nostalgic feel. Besides the O'Rourke augmented line-up, the double set features contributions from New Music legends like Fluxus operative and *Tai Mahal Traveller* Takehisa Kosugi, composer and John Cage associate Christian Wolff, and percussionist William Winant, alongside SY studio producer/engineer Wharton Tiers, Christian Marcley and Gordon and Moore's daughter Coco (whose take on Yoko Ono's "Vocal Piece For Soprano" is truly primal). Despite the forbidding nature of the terrain covered, which includes compositions by Steve Reich, John Cage and Cornelius Cardew, the results still sound very much like Sonic Youth. Inevitably the group work best on the pieces that encourage the greatest level of individual interpretation. Written especially for the group, Pauline Oliveros's "Six For New Time" is particularly effective.

These interpretations offer invigorating proof of the way underground rock and conservatory avant-garde have developed along parallel lines, even if few on either side of the tracks Intherto caned to admit the fact. Countless sound thinkers have interpreted the music; the point, as Sonic Youth have always maintained, is to change it. ☺

TOOLS  
YOU  
CAN  
TRUST  
TRADEMARK  
GUITAR  
ABUSE  
FROM  
RAMALDO  
(TOP)  
AND  
MORE



PHOTOS: BUDÖRN, BÜCHER (TOP); PHOTOS: NACHO BRAVO (BLOW)

# Charts

## Playlists from the outer limits

### All Tomorrow's Parties 15

**Throbbing Gristle**  
"Three Days" (4AD/PR CD3)  
**Bonnie Prince Billy**  
"Early Morning Motel" (4AD/PR CD8)  
**Sex Pistols**  
"God Save the Queen" (4AD/PR CD2)  
**Tenacious D**  
"Break Everyday Soundtrack" (Beggars Banquet)  
**Beowulf**  
"Super Nova" (4AD/PR CD8)  
**How Now Cabo**  
"Dance With Me" (Isobell Recording)  
**Page M**  
"Over Jordan" (Drop City)  
**High Dependency Unit**  
"Inevitably (Tying Net)"  
**Fugazi**  
The Agnostic (Deschon)  
**Mighty Flashlight**  
Mighty Flashlight (Lade Test)  
**Radiohead**  
"Fake It Out" (Parlophone)  
**23 Skidoo**  
Seven Songs (RCA)  
**Cerebral Ox**  
"I'm Not in the DTC" (Def Jam)  
**Vincent Gallo**  
When (Weird)  
**Russell Haswell**  
"Marguerite Augmentin" (4AD/PR CD10)

### KindaMuzik 15

**Le Tigre**  
"Feminist Superheroes" (Ochoa On Speed)  
**Millionaire**  
"Outside The Broken Rock" (FAT)  
**This Heat**  
"Drown In Your Love"  
**Tape Grizzlies**  
The Great Deflation (Roughplay)  
**Roky Erickson**  
The Evil One (Rykodisc)  
**Jesus & The菩萨子**  
"Slow Train" (Rykodisc/Runa)  
**No-Neck Blues Band**  
Sacks And Stories May Break My Blues (Reverend)  
**Naked City**  
"Hurtin' (I'm Your)"  
**Morrissey**  
Strong Counter (The Hat Hut)  
**Stars Of The Lid**  
The Tired Sounds Of (Kesky)  
**Sons Skinned**  
On The Wire (Avalon)  
**Fences 2**  
Endless Summer (Legal)  
**Wilburz**  
"Body Electric: Challenges" (Jaastland)  
**Puscifer**  
Coffered Works (Racka)  
**John Coltrane**  
Interstellar Space (Impulse!)

### 15 Musicians' Books (non-autobiographical)

**Paradise: A Predator's Diary**  
Lydia Lunch (Creation Books)  
**The Consumer**  
Michael Clegg (1981)  
**Hot Acid**  
Robert Hot (PowerHouse)  
**Tearants**  
Bob Dylan (Macmillan)  
**And The Ass Saw The Angel**  
Walt Disney (Black Flying Press)  
**Babel**  
Paul Smith (IDP/Putman's Sons)  
**Frank Spokane My Father**  
Vince Spokane (Pischen Books)  
**Get Off The Phone**  
Jeremy Lee-Pace (219 Art)  
**He Exclusions Of Grandpa**  
Harry Rollin (Blissful Fretful)  
**Go Now**  
Suzanne Hot (Roden)

**Alabama Wilderness**  
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**Anti-Pop Consortium**  
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U Sound Vol. 1 (Parallels)

**Pygmy**  
Incent (Atakai)

**Req**  
Starfuckers (Weird)

**Neil Michael Manning**  
Peter, The Great Old Moon, And Roll (Drop City)

**Chicago Underground Duo**  
Ain And Abegone (The Jockey)

**The Soes** Catering Band  
Artificial Additives (Peripherial/Conserv)

Compiled by Barry Hogan, All Tomorrow's Parties, [www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk/see/OutThere/](http://www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk/see/OutThere/)

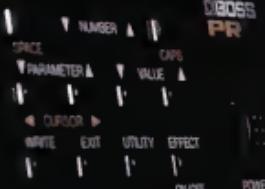
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Compiled by The Wire Sound System

All channels open: Sielaski's mass media (see invisible jukebox, page 255)

SOFT KEYS



1000 COMPRESSOR FIVEPEAK DUAL CHANNEL COMPRESSOR LIMITER WITH GATE

CHANNEL A CHANNEL B

PEAK PEAK PEAK PEAK

ATTEN. ATTEN. ATTEN. ATTEN.

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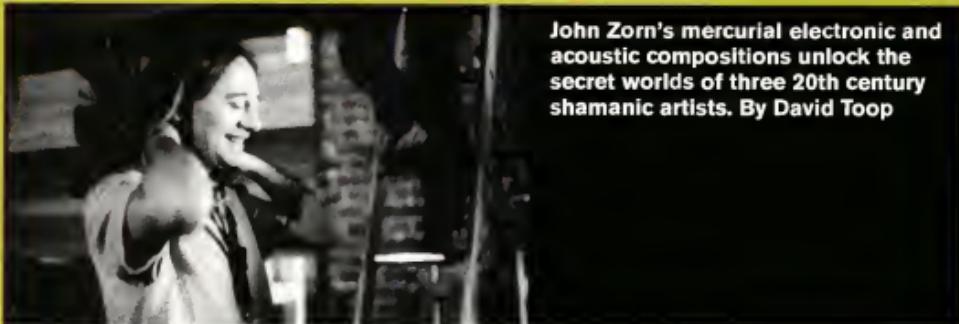
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# Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, albums and singles



American Magus: John Zorn

**John Zorn's mercurial electronic and acoustic compositions unlock the secret worlds of three 20th century shamanic artists. By David Toop**

## JOHN ZORN

SONGS FROM THE HERMETIC THEATRE  
Tzadik Tz7009 CD

## JOHN ZORN

FILMWORKS X: IN THE MIRROR OF  
MAYA DEREN

Tzadik Tz7353 CD

How to explain CDs to a dead hare? Music is an art of illusion and transformation, the creation of subjective mental images and sensory impressions through operations that are largely intangible and, to some degree, mysterious to both perseverer and activator. For his latest releases, John Zorn has created works of great diversity and varied technical means, lenses of speculation through which are viewed three 20th century virtuosos in the shamanic art of transformation: film maker, dancer and author Maya Deren, film maker, painter and collector Harry Smith, and artist and educator Joseph Beuys. To borrow the words of Joseph Campbell, these were artists "full of gods".

In one respect, the currency of these three figures has become marginalised within the god-empty context of global shopping "culture"; from another viewpoint, their potency continues to accumulate for those who value the history and continuity of independent, inspirational thought. Smith and Deren are firmly sited in the crucible of downtown New York, a magical locus that Zorn himself continues to perpetuate. "Millenia of human diversity and invention seems to have been shipwrecked here," anthropologist James Clifford wrote of New York, "remnants and broken shards, good to evoke in escapist reveries, good to collect as art (or antiques), and 'good to think with' in salvaging the cultural structures of a transhistorical esprit humain."

Through their transformation of the everyday, Deren, Smith and Beuys postured a different kind of life, beyond and outside the bureaucratic "rationalism" of capital. As written in the sleeve notes for *Songs From The Hermetic Theatre*, Zorn "learned alchemical synthesis from Harry Smith, structural ontology from Richard Foreman, how to make art out of garbage from Jack Smith, cathartic expression at Sluggs and hermetic intuition from Joseph Cornell." One might

describe this particular album, largely a solo, as a "departure": there is a track of electronic music, a track of computer music, a track of speech and sound, a track bisected from many extraordinary devices and substances (honey, wax, felt, fat, blood, carcass of a hare, newspaper, trowel, \$82 in cash, rubber ball, 78rpm records and phonograph, toy megaphone and so on), some of which could have been transformed by Beuys in alchemical performance pieces such as *How To Explain Pictures To A Child Here*. The 78rpm records and phonograph might have been used by Smith, of course, in his curatorial journeys among the once and forever dispossessed of American music.

But these are not departures so much as a flickering movement between source materials (origins) and mature expression, the multiple reflections of two facing mirrors. Concerning reality, Joseph Beuys once asked: "Is it the limited materialist understanding of material, or is it substance? Substance for me is the greater issue and includes evolutionary power which leads ultimately to the real meaning of Matter." This is the consistent way in which Zorn has worked with sound; not a matter of genres, styles, fashions, poses, tribalism or career moves (though such ephemera affect us all) but a consistent search to understand Matter in its relation to time and human behaviour. Small audible traces of activity (some people still demand distinctions between noise, sound and music, all these years after John Cage) move through a map of time in Beuys&Zorn, the enigma of their deliberation, their placement, sharpened by the high neon shadow of Jennifer Choi's strings. *In The Very Eye Of Night*, (almost) the title of Deren's last completed film before her too-young death, becomes through Zorn the nexus of her voice and his audio-frrottism: bass drum resonance, rough grain electric bass clawing at loudspeaker cones, creeping cobweb frequencies, liquid and air. Deren speaks of time and women, constant metamorphosis, one image becoming another, the importance in her films of what is happening rather than what is. Both electronic pieces, *American Magus* and *The Nerve Key*, seem preoccupied with this sense of becoming. Their tumbler and spit is an unravelling of boundless energy that mirrors the perpetually transforming images of Harry

Smith's animated films, the wheeling Shee-hin sword of Deren's *Meditation On Violence*.

Zorn composed the 15 pieces collected on *In The Mirror Of Maya Deren* as contributions to a documentary film of Deren's life and work, directed by Martina Kudláček. With so much music already available, both from Deren's husband, composer Teiji Ito, and from her late 1940s recordings of Haitian Vodouju rituals, Zorn's score aims to give emotional coherence to the complexity of her story. There are sombre pieces that evoke her Jewish roots in Kiev, where she lived until 1922; playful allusions to Balinese gamelan and dance (an interest she shared with anthropologist Gregory Bateson); the trance drum patterns of Haitian Vodou and the World Music syntheses so engagingly and unpretentiously constructed by Ito.

The compositions are played with wonderful clarity and simplicity of feeling by cellist Erik Friedlander, keyboard player Jamie Saft and percussionist Cyro Baptista. Zorn plays percussion and piano on some tracks. Just one chord at the centre of a skittering percussion exchange is enough, on the ghostly "Mirror Worlds", to recall the spirit of its little synopses, the music he recorded for *The Very Eye Of Night* and *Meshes Of The Afternoon*. I particularly like Zorn's unaffected, tender piano playing on the three versions of "Drifting". Suggestions of Deren as a fervent dreamer arise in these three short pieces, a woman we can only imagine from the haunted, yearning beauty of expression captured in photographic portraits and film frames.

More than once, I also hear a faint echo of Don Cherry, another exalted wanderer who searched for universality among the dispersed shards of global humanity. All of these histories accumulated around the lives of Deren, Ito, Smith and Beuys are as fragmentary and elusive as the work itself. Zorn appears to be confronting the imbalance between their humble stature within the suspect pantheon of artistic reputation and their continuing significance to issues of real importance. Seemingly lost in the rushing noise of information, like moments in a dream, they are pulled back into consciousness by another dreamer, made "good to think with" once again. □

## ALÉMU AGA

## ETHIOPHIQUES 11: THE HARP OF KING DAVID

BUGA MUSICURE #2229 CD

## VARIOUS

## ETHIOPHIQUES 10: TEZETA

BUGA MUSICURE #2222 CD

BY PETER SHAPIRO

Most of the previous editions in the groundbreaking *Ethiopiques* series have concentrated on the funkier sounds of 'Swinging Addis', the 'Ethno Jazz' of Mulatu Astatif, the unreconstructed bleepflopston atmospheres of Mamadou Ahmed and Houné Bigaïla, and so on. The latest volumes, however, home in on the true heart of Ethiopian music: the blues. Not the blues as many know it, but the kind of exquisite heartbreak familiar from rembetika, fado, the dentist tango and the most fervent ghazal.

'Tezeta' literally means 'memory' and 'nostalgia', but in the hands of the artists collected on *Ethiopiques 10*, this song form and musical mode is no wistful ode to halcyon days gone by, instead, it's hymn, full of an impeccable loss and a melancholy yearning on morbidity. The lyrics are largely along the lines of 'Last night I went to your house? I left my heart and came away only with my lungs; I wish I were the earth in your courtyard, to thir at least under your footnotes' (from Mulatu Mihléssé's evocative 'Hiditch Alu'). But you don't have to read the lyrics sheet to understand this magnificently bleak music. The voices are haunted, wracked, wracked by guilt and unrequited love, the tempos and arrangements aren't too dissimilar from certain suicides, shuffling doo-wop dinges, but with an ashtray song replacing haughty strings and chorus. Numb players will undoubtedly cap about the lumbering piano or the beat rhythms. Compared to the African-American traditions from which these records were derived, this is certainly true, but such remarks miss the point. If you want to wash that man right out of your hair, put on a blouse and pack the pants, listen to Fash Evans, but if you want to wallow in despair in your seven rooms of gloom, ditch the Nick Drake and put this on instead.

Of course, the strained agony of *Tezeta* might swing a bit too much for you. If a crate of barbiturates and a stack of Robert Petre Williams records is your idea of a party, go straight to *Ethiopiques 11*. Agéu Aya plays the beguine ('King David's Harp'), an enormous ten song lya made of wood and sheep's gut that wails along the same principle as the Indian tamboura and, according to legend, dates back 3000 years. The string plucking sounds a bit like a West African kora after too much iota lets, while the vibro drone is akin to playing a rubber band across a cake tin in an underground cellar. The instrument is closely linked to Ethiopia's Coptic orthodoxy, and Agéu whispers old Testament fables and poems of devotion to God like a stagheart pond at dusk, this is awesomely still meditative and triquet, but also dark and unfathomable.

## AGNEL/MARCHETTI/

## NOETINGER

## ROUGE GRIS BRUIT

POTLUCK P401 CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

'The breakdown of amplification between input and output is a moment of anxiety,' begins Brandon Loffleben's short sleeve essay

accompanying this album of improvisations conducted by electroacoustic players Lionel Marchetti and Jérôme Noetinger, and pianist Sophie Agnel. The conversation we see up here is between action and reaction, no doubt by the response between Agnel's acoustic piano and the other pair's various amplifications. As such, the three constituent parts of Rouge Gris Bruit provide each other a continual interplay challenge. It opens with delicate plucks on wires – almost a chromatic drive; shortwave radio sounds skitter across what is, at first, a great, yawning landscape.

It makes it matter if you don't know who or what initiates each section? Listening without recourse to either sleeve or CD display, it's impossible to make clear distinctions between 'Natif', 'Après-Midi' and 'Epilogue'. Instead, you sense a sudden acceleration as Agnel's piano strings yield some high tempo notes, or at later stages, a thick swirl of sound that's effectively a study in harmonics. This isn't to say that Rouge Gris Bruit lacks a logic of its own, which functions best when you step outside the realm of wild interpretation. Then the background scrapings and tail-off scream of 'Après-Midi' congeal into a most effective soundtrack for an unnamed internal horror. A series of many disconcerting events unfold within clouds of electronic sound and half-awful utterances. That series is the medium through which the trio transfer the moments of anxiety inherent in Improv practice to their listeners.

BEATLESS  
LIFE MIRRORS

UBICITY UBR05 CD

BY JON WELDON

West London bestmakers Paul Martin and Alex Atala aka Beatless attempt to create a light and 'soulful' rhythmic blue by fusing broken beats, Big Hop and World Music. Much like Automaton's *Lovage* project, they melow dace-like rhythms with a range of peace and love vocal sounds and flicked, warm, organic instrumentation. 'Future abstract' soft they call the boho mishmash, and it requires a couple of stellar vocalists to lift it out of the post-hype mire.

The standout vocalist, an unknown Colonel Red, makes an immediate impact with an impassioned falsetto somewhere between Horace Andy and Manu Chao. From non-verbal chants on the Native American-influenced 'Two' to spiritual reverberations on 'Love Sugar Like Rain', his elegant vocal graces contain smooth crooning with a more immediate angularity style. Mutating Cutty Zutman's ubiquitous 'six million ways to die' phrase into a soulful 'There are six million ways you can fly' chorus on 'The Truth', he then stretches it out dramatically over an early minimalist break.

The impossibly hyperactive Quasimodo, the sit-shit-taking after-egg of underground leapdog Medivo (The Loopback, Yesterday's New Quintet), and Medivo himself goode two tracks – a delightful diversion from all the leadsgod spirituality. 'Rock On' features the schizophasic duo matching two step, bass-heavy syncopation perfectly as they espouse the transcendence of everyday banality. On 'Comment', Medivo mumbles laidback doses while Quasimodo spits, 'We keep it on the up and up. we be the prominent/Suckers can't catch it, cause we be the dominant' over another sinister beat.

Following a nostalgic trend in the world of lepped grooves, from Lovage's lounge to OutKast's funk to Madlib's jazz crackgigging, Beatless's soul has a sense of lost musical delight with London's stellar studio techniques. It is so fluid, channelling threatening to drift off into the ether, though, that however exquisitely complex the breaks, both real and programmed, they need a Madlib/Gusmão punch to bring them back down to earth.

KYLE BRUCKMANN  
AND

MUSICA GENERA MG001 CD

BY GARY WARBURTON

Apart from the iteration of a few notable exceptions (Yusef Lateef, Sonny Simmons) the oboe and cor anglais have never quite established themselves as legit jazz instruments (unlike the clarinet, which ride off into the early 20th century American popular music on the wave of New Orleans' translation of the French classical tradition into Creole jazz), while in the domain of contemporary classical music the oboe has retained a strong presence, thinks in as small part to the virtuosity of Heinz Holliger, as both performer and composer. In the light of recent developments, in oboe technique called for by younger minds, many of whom are writing with Holliger in mind, it's clear the instrument is perfectly suited to the demands of today's improved music. In the hands of a great player, it's as agile as any clarinet, and just as capable of mutations and extended techniques as the saxophone. On the strength of his second album, following his solo debut *Entomology* on Borealis, Audible a couple of years back, Chicago-based Kyle Bruckmann is up to the task.

And this is a collection of duets featuring his oboe, cor, suona (a Chinese double-reed instrument) and riffs against the cream of Chicago improv sets: percussionists Michael Zerang and Weasel Walter, bass clarinets Gene Coleman and Scott Rosenberg, trombone Jeb Bishop, and cello Fred Lohengrin and Jim Baker on synthesizer. Where Bruckmann's first album *and euse* showed his virtuoso playing, And reveals he's just as capable of virtuoso listening. He can take on Zerang and Bishop in the outer reaches of instrumental technique, craft beautiful and coherent melodic lines with the clarinet, hit multiphonics dead on as cleanly as John Butcher, and if need be blow the hell out of the upper register – quite a feat on a double-reed instrument – to produce a screaming high end. All this before going the distance with the ebullient Weasel Walter in a final round-worth of Peter Brötzmann.

BERTRAND BURGALAT  
THE SSSOUND OF MIMMUSIC  
DISCUSES TRICATEL TRICATEL CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

As the title says, 'The SSSound of Mimmusic is designed for seduction'. But the disc doesn't follow the straightforward trajectory the word seduction often assumes. Look at the sleeve pictures – young man reclines on sand, flops about in the sea, sits beneath an implausibly blue beach umbrella – and for an instant, a stream of associations percolate. Isora's Café del Mar, chillout zones, lazy music for indulgent violence. Well, the latest album from Corsican's

Bertrand Burgalat, whose other major credits include work with Idris Biabu's ex-wife Ingrid Caussé, Laioban, Mick Honey and El Meliente. Burgalat, might instead be played beneath implausibly blue beach umbrellas, but no conclusions should be drawn from that.

The *SsSOUND* of Mimmusic's laudant textures, breathy vocals and subdued beats lure the listener into a certain relaxation, while the implausible Latin beats and little dubbed out spaces that appear here and there hint at the extent of Burgalat's role as a master seducer, yet the album leads you places that you can't anticipate with any clarity.

As one would expect from a musician with Burgalat's CV, his practice isn't straightforward. The odd interview on say, 'Ma Reconcile', or the exotic slippage of 'Coraline Imparati' offer enough hints that his vision is hardly mainstream. His shifting sets of strings are far from complacent. At a stretch you could say that he plays with the disposable nature of lounge music. But if you don't think about it, you'll wake up to discover you've been seduced and abandoned.

THE NELS CLINE SINGERS  
INSTRUMENTALS  
CRYPTOGRAPHICSONG CGH113 CD

BY ANDY HAMPTON

Nels Cline has been highly described as one of the most versatile, imaginative and criminally unheralded guitarists working today. In the late 1970s he played in the chamber jazz group Quartet Music with his brother Alex, and has since steered an individual course across the fluid boundaries of free jazz, avant rock and noise. Recent collaborators include percussionist Gregg Bendian, Vinny Golia and Thurston Moore, and he's worked in bands with Zeena Parkers and partner Norton Western.

Instrumentals is a superb album. Maybe it was a mistake to read Nels Cline's own judicious, witty and informative press release about it, because I find myself agreeing with just about everything he says in its defense. The group's name is a wry reference to 60s Easy Listening vocal groups, but the Singers are an instrumental trio along the lines of his elder cohort, 'innovatively called the Nels Cline Inv.' (probably a very reference to jazz-lit groups). Cline's various singing guitars, Gene Hoffs bass and Scott Amendola's drums make for a three-way dialogue of separate and equal voices.

Amendola's stunning firme and growves are, it seems here, 'augmented by his new electronic madness', and if their's madness in the general exuberance there's also clear method in it. The range of styles the group encapsulates across a 77 minute CD is remarkable, from Omélie Coleman-style freedom on 'A Mug Like Mine' through the wailing blues 'Lowered Boom' to the rolling, one-chord power play of 'Cause For Concern'. Cline claims the Singers are his first truly tour-worthy unit. If you live in the US, look out for them in your hometown, otherwise you may need to indulge some very worthwhile nomadic desires of your own.

LOL COXHILL  
SPECTRAL SOPRANO  
EMMEN #204 2CD

BY OLIVE BRILL

This magnificent release is a carefully compiled two CD retrospective of the career of one of

## SOUL CENTER

III  
NORMMUTE: NORMMUTE CD

In the beginning there was rhythm. That's a no-brainer. But Cologne's Thomas Brinkmann, on the third installment of his Soul Center project, is interested in a different kind of history of dance music. He announces it in the epigraph to the album, in a quote from George Clinton - "12 inches before there were 12 inches" - that serves as the lead-in to an hour of chugging funk. Huh? The way the Clinton quotation has been truncated, it takes on a different meaning. Here, it's no longer about a particular kind of record (we can guess that Clinton was talking about dance records before they were codified as "extended play singles"), but in a word spatial/temporal flip-flop, it seems to be focusing on the stretch of recorded music right before the vinyl big bang created the dance universe as we know it: in a shower of 12" white labels and an explosion of genres that spun off into their own little solar systems.

In other words, once upon a time, when the beats moved at a crawl and the world didn't spin at 130 bpm, there was soul. Brinkmann is certainly no retro act, but he grew up on soul music in clubs where people danced close, and he's not afraid to be nostalgic. Soul Center, he says, is close to the spirit he thinks is missing today, a kind of grooviness that's been lost in a dance culture "that's become a little too much like sport." Appropriately, the project is named for a club Brinkmann frequented in the '70s, a disco from the years before disco that played American R&B to a crowd composed largely of American GIs stationed in Germany.

Thump thump means chicka-boom up-tempo: Thomas Brinkmann

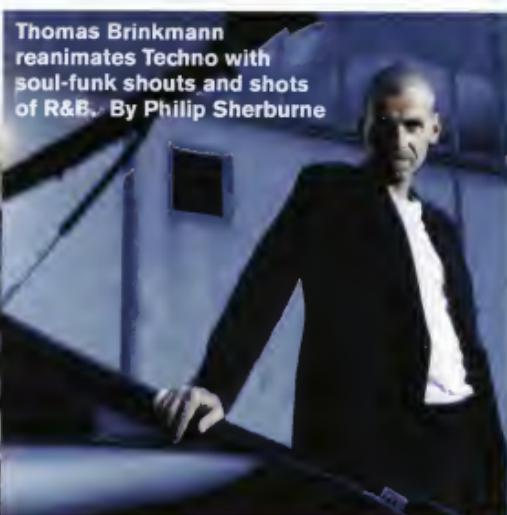
Brinkmann appeared in the late 1990s as one of Techno's most extreme minimalists, creating patterns carved out of vinyl with a knife, with a tonal range restricted to the barest muted thumps and clicks. On releases for his own max Ernst label and the philosophically inclined Supposé, he explored the limits of the loop. But in 1999, on his first record released as Soul Center, he resuscitated his austere grooves with sounds of a very different origin, with grunts and yelps and bluesy onomatopoeia lifted from Motown's back catalogue: a sonic portrait of pure, disembodied expression straining at the limits of its container. Working with samples from Stax records, the second Soul Center LP focused on the loop in the context of Afro-American call and response, locking ones like "Can I ask you something?" and "Ain't I clean?" into endless cycles. These looped calls were designed to provoke the same response from the dancing crowd. They were grinding, visceral records aimed at short-circuiting the clean, affectless machinery of mass-produced dance music.

It is a natural continuation of the Soul Center project. The shouts are still there, but they're more restrained. Keeping to a few spoken word fragments mostly snipped from the funk canon - "How far do you wanna go?", "I know/I know/I know/I know", the sputz cry "I don't know what this world is..." - Brinkmann locks them into a loop vortex that sucks out all their meaning. What's said matters less than the act of repeating it. Brinkmann has expressed fascination with the hidden messages of African-American culture and the alternative forms of signifying developed under oppression. His use of looped vocals suggests an effort to read between the lines.

The major break from the first two Soul Center records, though, is it's almost complete absence of samples. Not that you immediately notice it. Brinkmann calls some of his percussion sounds, ragged snares and hand drums from old records, thereby maintaining the rawness of the first two Soul Center albums. But the jaunty organ riffs, the bushy-tailed vibes, the hyperactive step bass are all Brinkmann and his machines. "A lot of people thought I took this and that and this," says Brinkmann, "but nobody could name the sources - and in fact it was not possible to name them because I made them up." On Soul Center records, then, the "sampling" factor is simply a process of cultural quotation. What distinguishes Soul Center from the retro simulacra of, say, White Stripes' take on Detroit blues rock or The Poets Of Rhythm's immaculately counterfeited funk 45s, is the way Brinkmann folds his quotations into the fabric of German dub Techno. It's a method made familiar from a generation of labels like Profan and Basic Channel, where a set of variations is based entirely on filling in the spaces around a regular lockdrum and its answering hi-hat. Thump-thump meets chicka-boom up-tempo.

German music has long held a fascination with the culture of the Black Atlantic - after all, Techno comes from black Detroit and is heavily invested in dub. Brinkmann's bastardized music carries a newfound subversion, however subtle, in those parts of Europe where xenophobic factions stir up anti-foreigner feelings over issues of immigration and national identity. "I don't know what this world is" is no longer just a funny sample. In its truncated anguish, it carries the shouts of outsiders and the silence forced upon them.

Thomas Brinkmann  
reanimates Techno with  
soul-funk shouts and shots  
of R&B. By Philip Sherburne



London's best-loved musicians. Lou Cahill is old enough to have seen National Service in the Air Force ("The best thing was seeing the John Dankworth Seven in a converted iron dancehall in [postwar],") and young enough to join electronics whizkid Knut Ahlforsen for an LMC live Internet linkup with Antennae. His willingness to enter wholeheartedly into this kind of project, alongside musicians young enough to be his grandchildren, is one of his noted characteristics. Another is his onstage humor — his timing and deadpanning are the equal of many full-time comics. The audience audibly eats out of his hand as he sings "Sweet Hawaiian Kisses" with Steve Benfield and Tony Cox in the two known as "The Melody Four Yet comedy can be a milestone round a musician's neck, and Cahill employs it only when he sees fit. In 1982 he wrote a special interview for *Collision* magazine: "I saw you with [Derek Bailey's] *Composers Think God They had at least one come soprano player*! 'I didn't do anything funny' 'Come on, man, those books. Break me up.'

What basic we've put the most on this album was "Murder in the Air," Cahill's rendition of all the voices in a 1920s (tenquel) play about a suspicious flying accident. Expertly chaotic accompaniment comes from Veyron Weston and Rick Riv. There's the voice. Cahill's high tenor is a surprisingly tender instrument. He isolates instantly impassable wrenches on Gershwin's "Embraceable You," then segues into the full-blooded sax and piano torrent of Charlie Parker's "Quiescence." On one of the most bizarre tracks, he transforms "Uptown Top Ranking" into pearly neggab steaze — or is that what it was all along?

Oh, and the saxophone. Always loquacious, squirming phrases away, a curious tone full of cat-threatening coarseness. Here we see some teleoism, from the rich, warm jazz tinge of "Pedals" at the Hop Pole, Aylesbury (1954), via the soprano and echo unit alongside Steve Miller's Wurter piano (very 1973), to the 1990s electronic landscapes of Paul Schitte, and the "concerto" with the London Improvisers Orchestra. Many a jazzie would have stayed with Hop Poleism and still be playing it today, but Cahill has opted for a carry-on immedieness about genre, embracing the risks of spontaneity. In his words, "My major involvement is remain with musical 'cliff-hanging,' though I retain my interest in other more restricted musical forms."

Finally, I love this album for the way you can hear an alternative history of musical London is the background. The 60s R&B of Tony Knight's

Chessmen, The Damned's Lou Edmonds at Benny's Bar in Brixton, sound poet Bob Cobbing's birthday bash at Solly O'Brien's in Peckham, the sound of drummer Steve Noble's basement. Live atmosphere encrusts many of these recordings like urban lotion. I realize I feel a kind of pathos about Lou Cahill, a stronger emotional attachment than to the Queen.

### HUGH DAVIES WARMING UP WITH THE ICEMAN

GROB 334 CD  
BY TOM PERCHARD

Hugh Davies's homemade instruments — he calls them "steogys" — are weird Rube Goldberg-like contraptions, where things like springs, saw blades and wire are screwed onto wooden bases and amplified with contact microphones. In the mid-1980s, Davies assisted and played with Stockhausen for the German composer's *Mitropia*, a piece scored with a mixture of graphic and traditional notation, and one that uses as its sound source an amplified tam-tam played with household objects. That experience may have shaped Davies's subsequent music, as such sound sources and conceptual methods are intrinsic to his identity, but the music here has an entirely individual sound.

Although each of the seven compositions employs a different steogy, the sheer novelty of an instrument's sound or the way it's played is never Davies's concern. His real strength is a more or less conversational and highly developed musicality. Whereas someone like Adam Bohman might use amplified objects to liberate sound from its traditional instrumental contexts, the expansive phrasing and sense of drama in Davies's playing squarely situates his work within a European instrumental tradition — akin to the long crescendos and quick, lunging movements that he uses to build the wistful opening section of "Lunar Day." His sense of form and narrative is sure throughout. At 19 minutes, "Shoogy Sequence No. 3" is by far the longest piece on the CD, but its clearly audible structure contrasts with an extreme complexity of sound to produce an entirely satisfying whole.

To demonstrate the versatility of his steogys, Davies recorded two versions of "Music For A Single String." The one closing the album is perhaps the best track: extremely violent, yet melodic; in Davies's hands the string has a range of sounds that exceeds that of many traditional, "refined" instruments. The same could

be said for the percipience, the most recent of his constructions, here given its own five-minute piece. This shoogy is a little circuit board that's soaked with feathers and blades to produce the sort of sound effects might have made if he had played the piano.

### DISKAHOLICS ANONYMOUS TRIO

CRAZY WISDOM CW006  
BY JOHN GRATCHY

After the piteousulant blurt of noise and confusion that introduces the cowering presence, and momentarily challenged reputations, of Mars Gustafsson, Jim O'Rourke and Thurston Moore, a Diskaholics Anonymous Trio, this live recording from Kulturfabrik 2000 in Sweden takes on an altogether more interesting slant, allowing all three players to demonstrate their free Improv credentials to the full.

O'Rourke is a synthesizer and computer for the voice. To his great credit, he manages to control his partners' excesses and release their natural ability to pursue the moment without being too definitive. Thurston Moore is at the best when he engages his instrument not only as a guitar, but as a piece of percussion. His unique voice is best heard unclouded by massive thrash overtones. Delicately isolating the strings and allowing both their sound and their texture to be noticed, he sets a mood of concentration and focus on details. O'Rourke instinctively responds with stabbing pulses and applies a shared sense of loss before an unexpected change gives a lift to the spirit. On "End Of The Moon," a static synth-drenched space rock excursion suddenly reaches escape velocity and explodes into a double-sawed flight of the soul. And the steadily building repetition of "Rebucible" breaks down to a single baseline, then a lone trumpet, which is soon overlaid in a lush arrangement, as if a shaft of light has just come through the studio window.

Although the bulk of the structural work is carried out by the bass, bass drum (the doubling up is very subtle) and guitar, the keyboards provide textual nuances throughout. Only on "Soil And Driard" do the drums sound a little boorish; otherwise you wouldn't know or care that they were recorded at guitarist Justin's house (their previous album was recorded in a barn), and a closer listen reveals the ample care that's gone into the mix. Warm and comforting to have around, a diverting distraction. The End of Music? How there's an idea.

DO MAKE SAY THINK  
& YET & YET  
CONSTELLATION CST 9999 CD  
BY PHIL ENGLAND

Although they are frequently lumped in the same bag, the only connection Toronto's Do Make Say Think have to Montreal's Godspeed You Black Emperor is a shared record label. They have neither the intricacy of Godspeed's confused political yearnings nor the manipulative grand emotional arch of their rock symphonic poisons to resignation.

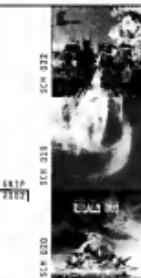
DMST are much more compact and unassuming. Their feedback instruments are mostly contributed with early Tortoise, Warm baselines, sharp, clean, firmly impulsive drumming and perfect melodic guitar convey a shared sense of loss before an unexpected change gives a lift to the spirit. On "End Of The Moon," a static synth-drenched space rock excursion suddenly reaches escape velocity and explodes into a double-sawed flight of the soul. And the steadily building repetition of "Rebucible" breaks down to a single baseline, then a lone trumpet, which is soon overlaid in a lush arrangement, as if a shaft of light has just come through the studio window.

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### JEWLIA EISENBERG TRILECTIC

ZADK 121188 CD  
BY JUAN COWLEY

It's an album as fluid between Meredith Monk and Sweet Honey In The Rock. That's some space to occupy, but New Yorker Jewlia Eisenberg, now based in Oakland, California, covers a lot of stylistic ground, posting a *a cappella* outfit. Charming Hostess is a dazzling display of vocal agility, wit, emotional flexibility



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the legendary  
Cleveland group  
that gave birth to  
Pere Ubu



**Skeleton crew: Rocket From The Tombs**

### ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS THE DAY THE EARTH MET THE ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS HEARPIGLITTERHOUSE CRC0549 CO

This is a genuine blast from the past, in impact as well as in name. Although *Rocket From The Tombs* are mainly remembered as a Pere Ubu prototype, the group don't sound remotely tentative: confident, yes; as experimental as mischief and, occasionally, yes, as guts. But never tentative. *The Tombs* takes on early Ubu achievements like "30 Seconds Over Tokyo" and "Final Solution", here given their first official release, roar forth from the speakers fully realised. When their guns were firing, they achieved sonic distinction, a searing, high octane magnificence. Blazing among trails, they deserve to be celebrated, not consigned to a historical footnote.

It would be a mistake, however, to give the impression that the group sprang from the godhead fully formed. They sprang, far more prosaically, from Cleveland, Ohio, "city of light, city of magic" on the shores of Lake Erie, and their lifespan was brief. Formed in a spirit of reckless experiment by David Thomas, in mid-1974, they achieved critical mass with the addition of Peter Laughner, Gene O'Connor and Craig Bell six months later, and collapsed amid rancour in August 1975. Drawn from three separate performances in 1975, this collection reveals their sources as well as the group transform them. It is bockened along, though, as many of their sets were, by The Stooges' "Raw Power" and "Search And Destroy" and pays formal tribute to The Velvet Underground twice: first with a cover of "Foggy Notion" and then with "Amphetamine", so named because of its musical debt to that other dubious pharmaceutical hymn, "Heroin". Other up-unk influences are also apparent. Traces of The Kinks, Blue Cheer, David

Bowie and Captain Beefheart linger and jeer like quaresome ghosts but can't dim the glory of The Rockets' own mewling, squalling cacophony.

It's hard to believe that music this vital is only now receiving official release. Most of the original songs here were eventually rerecorded by one or other of the principals: they would fail, in every instance, to match the brilliance of these prototypes. Even the eerie, post-apocalyptic "30 Seconds Over Tokyo" released by the first Pere Ubu line-up can't compare to the bombing raid re-enacted here.

"30 Seconds" is drawn from the first of the disc's three sessions, recorded for radio broadcast at the group's rehearsal space on 18 February 1975. Nine of the 12 tracks laid down that day are included here. They are quite simply stunning. Both "What Love Is" and "Ain't It Fun" were co-written by O'Connor and rerecorded by The Dead Boys, the group he went on to form with drummer John Madsen and sometime Tombs vocalist, Skiv Bators, after he changed his name to Cheetah Chrome. He might have spared The Dead Boys the bother: there's no room for improvement on either track.

The nihilism of Peter Laughner's reading of "Ain't It Fun" is devastating. You can't need to know co-writer Laughner's fate – in thrill to the rock 'n' roll myth of wasted romanticism, he died of pancreatic in 1977 – to be called by a line like "Ain't it fun when you know you're going to die young?" You might register the bravado but what you really hear is what's denied: vicious, corrosive regret. Laughner's choked, stinging guitar lines belie his louche lyrics, acute and moving as any blues. In the instrumental section, his fiddling solo is buried, perversely, beneath O'Connor's bludgeoning rhythm guitar. Self-loathing is abundantly evident. What's surprising is its clear-sighted statement, its wrenching eloquence. This track alone

justifies the entire release.

Laughner's guitar plays a fluid, sculptural role throughout this first session. His command is thrillingly articulate, creating context, establishing atmosphere, giving chaos shape. It's a breathtaking display. He takes a less prominent role on the subsequent sessions, performance recordings from summer 1975. Both have a muddier sound, partially, at least, by design. The group have changed tactics, promoting noise to first principle. The guitars no longer sound wry or satiric – they clew at one another, like cats in a cavernous bag. The bass thuds urgently. Drums clatter and bash, benter and clash. Nothing sounds finished or settled; everything's chummed into void. And yet at the heart of this maelstrom, there's something missing: a gathering absence, a palpable void – as if all the sound and the fury was simply a way of making space to hear things differently.

It works. "Final Solution", sung by Laughner, sounds like "Summertime Blues" put together from scrap by primitives. (And in a way, it is.) "Seventeen" somehow continues to deconstruct punk – before it ever happened, of course. Both are from a show supporting Television at Cleveland's Peacock Inn in July, during which Thomas curiously passed no subtle remarks. The three songs from the Agora in May are something different again. Thomas is hugely present and hugely impatient. "Frustration" concludes its hectic business (chewing the carpet) in just over two minutes. "Down In Flames" falls completely to pieces in less, hastily recombining as a breakneck "Search And Destroy". Two years later, similar cage-rattling antics became epidemic. *Rocket From The Tombs* were pushing the envelope. Within weeks of the Television support slot, they'd rattled their own ship to bits. This release traces their starburst trajectory and presents that explosive moment as history. □

and imaginative depth. She opens with "Mi Dimantes", a traditional Sephardic song dressed in Bulgarian harmonies. Further traditional material and some klezmeric love songs close the set. Between lies the multi-ring "Innec Sut", inspired by a complicated relationship between German-Jewish cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), and Latvian communist theater director and actor Asa Luce (1891-1979). Kabbalistic scholar Gerhard Schlemm also figures in the drama.

The suite is a wonderfully versatile celebration of voice. Some passages are appropriately reminiscent of Degner House warbling passionately in the Arcades, but little is really predictable in Eisenberg's treatment of her intriguing subject. Her largely dignified investigation of the rhythmic potential of breath and body sounds recalls Mewski's ensemble work. As well as Jewish and Eastern European elements there are allusions to Pygmy chants, work songs, finely judged rock stylisations, doo-wop and gospel. "Eskimo Sut" is as quirky, funny and forceful as anything that the great a cappella group The Persuasions recorded during their fruitful mid-1990s alliance with avant-garde composer Ned Sublette and conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner.

Eisenberg's voice is central to the project but Carla Kihlstedt, Nils Frykholm and Dan Rathbun disappear from Charming Hostess's 1999 CD *Ear* (Nonesuch), joined here by Nina Rolfe, Miss Anderson and guests. The harmonic richness and rhythmic vitality of their interview voices are fleetingly augmented by percussion and bass, but essentially the a cappella arrangements are perfectly self-sufficient, and as enjoyable as they are impressive.

## MICHAEL FINNISY VERDI TRANSCRIPTIONS & PIANO CONCERTOS

METER 01092007 3XCD

BY PHILIP CLARK

The two CD sets of Michael Finney's piano music played by Ian Pace documents the composer's extraordinary sense of tradition. In a sense everything Finney does is a comment on one tradition or another, but the conceptual clarity behind the Verdi Transcriptions makes the work particularly approachable. When he began it in 1972, he envisaged four separate books of music, but by 1986 he had only finished the first book, and nine years later he combined the remaining material into a second. The work was premiered in that form by Ian Pace in 1995 during his season of Finney concerts at the Conway Hall. But why Verdi?

Finney describes being touched by "the energy, passion and wide-ranging generosity of Verdi's operas", and his transcriptions transform these qualities into a powerful personal statement. Some pieces like Verdi's foundations stay altogether and reassemble them again through the prism of Ives's piano music, or the compositional splicing and juxtaposing that Finney has borrowed from him. Others graft his embellishments on top of Verdi's original. The nine sections that make up Book One, meanwhile, are cunningly composed to form a massive 40 minute structure.

Starting in the dark bowels of the piano, an aria from *Oberto* is restituted so that it can have an acid and spiky two-part conversation with

itself. The fifth section (based on a septet from *Ernani*) represents a coitalising apex of brightness and joy. Verdi's original line poises through scintillating decoration of blending, complexity and Pace's pianistic achievement in keeping both strands active is quite remarkable. The piece splinters in section six into angrily deconstructed clusters and the effect is shattering. After the impact of Book One, the lesser structure of Book Two makes it feel less convincing but the individual pieces are no less impressive. The work ends with a colossal half hour re-composition of an aria from *Don Carlo* that begins in a decidedly Feldman-like manner before the calm is punctured by rude interruptions that imperceptibly build into frenetic avalanches of descending notes.

In his piano concertos Finney adopted ideas from the late 18th century French composer Charles Alkan — the Finnessy of his day who wrote music of tremendous harmonic and structural complexity, and created the illusion of the piano being both soloist and orchestra in his Concerto for Solo Piano. Finney's Concerto No 6 (1980-81) starts with a bang, but is a rather clandestine piece that spurs obsessively the lower register of the instrument and suddenly shifts to high and trills for its conclusion. Pace has described Concerto No 4 as the wildest piano piece ever written. Imagine your favourite Ceci Poco solo transcribed and then repeated with the conviction and heat of the source performance. This piece relentlessly reinvents the instrument as an orchestra controlled by a single pair of hands, something for which Ian Pace is superbly equipped.

## FOG

NINA TUNE 2X10CD  
OR PHILIP SHERBURNE

Fog's Andrew Broder, like his allies in *American and DEDDAD*, poses the question: what is HipHop, exactly? HipHop is a culture, of course, but the qualities of that culture — originally so strongly situated in particular socioeconomic, ethnic and geographical circumstances — have expanded and blurred in the last decade, as the genre has become increasingly diversified. Even in its shifting cultural capital, though, HipHop has generally retained a certain aesthetic: signature certain kinds of beats, particular lyrical styles. This album, however, references HipHop — it's on Ninja Tune, DoseOne guests and Broder talks in interviews about a youth spent DJing and writing graffiti — even as it's shorn of almost all the traditional signifiers, save for the scratching. Well, it's there, sort of, except when Broder talks about it, he's quick to check himself: "Not you know, scratch scratch."

If many a frustrated musician will do anything to wriggle out of committing verbally to a certain genre, no matter how entrenched the music really is, Fog's debut is one of those new albums that really doesn't belong to any one place. Neither hip hop nor avant garde, Broder's turntable work is a reminder that "artstablism" isn't the only way of writing a track. He wades in the future tense where those tides converge, and is left standing on his own sandbar when they subside.

Although he claims his moniker comes from a childhood spent in a fog, it's also an apt description of the sound he conjures, thick with

blurred, atonal scratching, fuzzed keys and sleepy acoustic guitars. Musing (y)ackademy Country soul with unrepentant low-fidelity beats, his bedroom recording drowses as much on the back porch as the basement party.

"Fuckedupfuckup" is the most "traditional" thing here, with a bass drum so overdriven you can feel the paper pealing off the speaker cones, occasional bongo samples and an extended scratch solo. "Truth And Laughing Gas" follows in the same mould, but the growling, despondent drawls owe more to Radiohead's dark theatricality.

Fog's also also says plenty about the interstellar component of his music. The heavy atmosphere is as consistent as cloud cover, and the shapeshifting form of his ideas is as difficult to describe. The album's chosen single, "Pneumonia", is the only thing here with anything like a melody. "Check Fraud" supposedly wears lyrics, but damned if I can hear anything past the classical guitar ringing, scratchy kazoo lead, and a lumbering breakbeat. This isn't really the future of HipHop, but as a fleeting reverie on its confected present, it makes for a fantastic delirium.

## ERIK FRIEDLANDER GRAINS OF PARADISE

ZTAK 121514 CD  
BY MATT FIFTYTHREE

Downtown jazz cultist Erik Friedlander — a regular collaborator with John Zorn, Joe Lovano and Dave Douglas, and who recently teamed up with Ninja Tune's drum machine — here departs for an exotic location described as "Sephardic meets Bollywood", a nod perhaps to *Stadtjazz*'s Radical Jewish Culture series. *Grains of Paradise* unites Friedlander with Trevor Dunn on bass, Satoshi Tomiie (percussion), Bryce Dessner (guitar) and a trio of violinists (Joyce Hammann, Karen Wise and Peter Roti). What this whole is to supply the kind of Middle Eastern panache that has recently been cranking Friedlander's ear. And if that's clear enough, he's named these compositions after species.

The fiery opening of "Zalath" — its propulsive bassline and bass, taft, suspie, melodic flanking of the string section — plunges you immediately into the golden era of lushkhan restaurant music. Against the pert, sassy jags of the tune and occasional lightning fast scales of the string section, Friedlander at first winds and weaves his way in the wings until a gap clears on the dosseroon, and he is oozing proud and plangent colours, ploughing a furrow of arpeggios or momentarily skating off over the strings in a tense and dissonant whisper.

Mostly recorded in a day, the album has a generous, tuneful feel. The compositions generally appear the balance of the rich and sassily rhythmic strings — overlaid in places to produce an electric melodic presence — with Friedlander's swooning lyrical wheeling and chipping its way into the heart of the melody. More languid tracks bring out Dessner's Moosel guitar work, and "Tajpur" explores an intimate trio with bass and percussion. But the most rewarding piece of mystery is reserved for the title track at the end, where Friedlander moves away from the form he's been exploring to create more of a suggestive tone poem. Here, the cellos pluck a restrained drop-chord arpeggio, as the violins, for once melodically uncertain, hold more ambivalent

tone clusters, while Tomiie points up the sense of otherness with abrasive cymbal scrapes, the clang of a tea chime or glittering rustle of a gong.

## FRED FRITH & MAYBE MONDAY

DIGITAL WILDLIFE  
WINTER & WINTER WAVES10071 CD

### MASSACRE

MELTDOWN

ZTAK 127906 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

For a week in May 2001, Fred Frith took his Maybe Monday quartet into Guerrilla Euphonics studio in Belfast, California, it sounds a cavernous place, in which Larry Ochs (ROVA Saxophone Quartet) can squawk at the other three from 50 metres away. Or maybe that's engineer Myra Bassen, himself a ferocious guitarist, playing with studio effects. Bassen adds weight and movement to the music with some creative manipulation, a little hammering on the sax here, a little delay on Joan Jeanneau's cello there. Mya Masaoka's koto and electronics complete the quartet. Although this sounds like a free improv record, repeated listening reveals a more complex story. Sometimes the whole group seem to be led through a delay to create repetition. It's hard to tell how much of the end result is Bosen's "real time sound manipulation", how much is Frith the composer reading the music at a late date, and how much was thrashed out live in Dinkirk. What is clear is that Frith is thinking outside the box, as they say, about how music can be made by improvisation, and that the pure, unsullied document of what was played in the studio is only one approach.

However, this music's a little hard to engage with. There's a disturbed beauty here, a restlessness that often poisons the music playing. That begs the question of whether music should go. Ochs in particular likes to baffle away at any approaching atmospheric shimmer, that's kind of a kind of Ambien reggae. Frith's guitar is highly imaginative and unpredictable as ever. The five tracks work like sequences of emotional episodes, struggling and sweating their way through passages of calm. And the closing "Close to Home" lays a peaceful lode of plucked strings under Ochs's exquisitely fanning sputtering.

One month later, Frith was in London for Robert Wyatt's Madam Festival, and a reunion of Massacre with Bill Laswell and Charles Hayward. Straight away you notice the big, warm,生成 sound conjured up on the Queen Elizabeth Hall stage by Ferguson Laswell associate Dr Orr. A few years ago I wrote a fantasy piece about *Free Improv in stadiums* — "Stadpop" it was called — and here is the example, translating the "seat of the parts" creativity and fired up group communication of the best *Improv* to the larger arena. Admittedly the QFM is not exactly Wimsey, and Massacre are fuelled with the energy of hardcore rock. Whatever, within the fast 20 minute track, Laswell's bass has increased the Pether scale, Hayward's drums are come to a crisp and Frith's guitar is somehow laconic and endlessly inventive at the same time. Chopping up his sound with gates, he sounds like he is hurling metal boxes at Laswell. Later on the same track he tries out a thready-gurdy imitation, then trades that in for a videogame soundtrack. Things get

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even hotter on the blissfully nouba "Figure Out", 25 minutes of 'look, no hands' interaction closing with Hayward's Ambient melodic. Frith has always been a reluctant guitar hero, and his response to being presented with space to stretch out at a big event is a wonder to behold. This is a probing, satisfying set that never preens or sinks into complacency. It's another Tradik release worthy of shelf space alongside Mirakle, Derek Bailey's seething funk tantum.

### GILES, GILES & FRIPP THE BRONDESURY TAPES VORCEMENT V1235 CD

BY DAVE MANOLI

The release of *The Brondesbury Tapes* makes available 70 minutes of demos by the whimsical jazz-pop outfit Giles, Giles & Fripp, legendary predecessors of King Crimson. The surprisingly high quality recordings were produced in 1968 in the group's home studio and, like GCF's one official release, *The Cheerful Insanity* of Giles, Giles & Fripp, they bear virtually no resemblance to the music of King Crimson, whose debut LP was just one year away.

The group's core line-up — Michael Giles on drums and vocals, brother Peter on bass and vocals, and Robert Fipp on guitar — is augmented on more than half the tracks here by multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald (another future Crimson member) and ex-Fairport Convention vocalist Judy Dyble. Her delicate singing fleshes out her later work with the folk group Tider Horne, most notably on "Talk To The Wind" (later re-titled by Crimson). McDonald adds lead vocals on a couple of tracks, and flute on alternate takes of "Digging My Lawn" and "Elastic Eyes". Also included on Brondesbury are a handful of songs co-written by McDonald and future Crimson lyrical Peter Sinfield.

The tracks written by Peter Giles stand out, including the delightfully "Newly Weds" and "Digging My Lawn", both later re-released for *Cheerful Insanity*. Fipp's compositions, though, are less developed, though his guitar playing — much warmer and jazzy than with Crimson — is already beautifully fluid and stunningly nimble. It's hard not to like these eccentric, catchy tunes. Although they had very brief Crimson moments like the spacey funk improv section of "Elastic Eyes", it's baffling to think that these same people produced *In The Court Of The Crimson King* just months later.

### DAVID GRUBBS ACT FIVE, SCENE ONE TRUE CHOCOLATES 829 CD

BY DOUGLAS WOLK

David Grubbs has always been fond of 'repetitions with difference', small and large. Back in his anar punk days with Bazooka, he included two versions of the same song on an album, and called it "Recidivist". Act Five, Scene One is a Groundhog Day of a piece: four 15 minute sections, all constructed on the same template. Each one starts with Grubbs fingerpicking a brief guitar obligato as if it were an executive's stress toy. He then varies its theme a few times with additional instrumentation, then casually recedes into near total inaction with occasional flutterings of activity wandering through the stereo field — distant cars, laptop beats, uncertain rasping noises, digital distortion. Just when you've stopped paying attention, the cycle

begins again, and a synth buzz at the end of the disc loops around to the beginning.

Grubbs calls this "anooe-bar rock 'n' roll". Well, 'snooze-bar' fits nicely, but the 'rock 'n' roll' bit is pushing it. Even when he's playing distorted guitar along with Dan Brown's snap drums at the beginning of the first section, he sings nummily behind the beat, and by the time he does it again in the fourth, the piece's languid inertia is so well established that it can't pick up much momentum. Grubbs is best when he plays against a foil, and the liveliest passage of *Act Five* actually comes from his frequent collaborator Tony Conrad. Sensing the spotlight is empty at the end of the first section, Conrad jumps in for a few minutes of solo violin scraping. Later, his solo tune recuts, co-opted into the endlessly repeating quarter-hour's inertia by Grubbs's patiently repetitive fingerpicking. There's a certain endy to this album, as with much of his recent work, but it's dryly witty, too.

### THE HERBALISER SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES NINJA TUNE ZEMCO64P CD

BY MOSI REEVES

The title track of *The Herbaliser's* third album showcases the singer bawling Seaweed to, who wraps her voice around Jake Wherry's and Teela's languorous arrangements. Their interplay builds to a dramatic crescendo, as The Easy Access Orchestra add a trumpet to underline their moves. Bewitching and intoxicating, it's the highlight of the album. The next track, a quirky piece titled "Verbal Aranci", makes for a startling contrast, no matter how assured *Dilated Peoples'* incisive sounds rapping over it. Sad.

"Something Wicked This Way Comes" turns to be an anomaly, as *The Herbaliser* settles into familiar UK rap territory, even if they do chug out beats that are slightly more musical than their American counterparts. On "Time 2 Build", a quirky baseline hides underneath the chopped dance sample. Other tracks like "Distinguished Jamaican English" and "Unshenging" are thrown together with vintage 70s elements — syncopated horns, wan-wan guitars and string sections — waded like Greek cheeses.

*The Herbaliser* may be an able production team, but they're David Auker, Poofy sequenced instrumental epics and rap cuts leave *Something Wicked...* sounding deejayed. They get some solid performances from the MCs they have gathered, including the aforementioned Incipiente, Blode (on "Time 2 Build") and Wideweller (on "Good Girl Gone Bad"). Even with such illustrious figures like US rapper MF Doom (or "It Ain't Nuttin'"), on board, however, there's nothing here to match *What What's* showing on "Mission Improbable", from *Herbaliser's* last effort, 1999's *Very Necessary*. The menacing immediacy of its mindblowing title track aside, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is quite a letdown, albeit a harmlessly frivolous and jaunty one.

### JAGA JAZZIST A LIVINGROOM HUSH SMALTONY SUPERBOND ST9059 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

Drawing players from a wide spectrum of Norwegian New Music — taking in styles as diverse as experimental electronics, rock and

jazz — Jaga Jazzist's sound is both nostalgic and committed to change. As a ten piece with wide ranging instrumentation encompassing brass, reeds, Penser Rhodes, vibraphone, guitar and drums, they are capable of tight arrangements that exhibit the cool complexity of Nucleus and the subtle inessentialism of Tortoise.

Their sound is a bizarre mixture, but it has great momentum with compositions constantly changing tack, adding new tonal colours and altering mood. On "Going Down", for instance, the funk groove is overlaid with smooth flute patterns, only to be surreptitiously invaded by ominous brass, clatter guitars and electronic disturbance. There is a striking sense of surprise at the group's ability to juxtapose such variation without merely making a style collage. The key cohesive is Martin Hammert's constant and insinuating percussive presence — using a mixture of kit and drum machine, he never lets the tinsel pass, even in laidback passages — twinned with the vibraphone, madrasa and percussion of Andras Maro. The group, and this duo in particular, are in danger of re-tainting the reputation of jazz/rock fusion, with a wholly integrated approach to rhythm and a masterful balance of instrumentation. The music is neither tawdry nor overly heavy. Rather, it's a feast of infectious beats and exciting arrangements delicately resolved with nuance to produce a variety of atmospheric pleasures.

### JASON KAHN PLURABELLE

CUT CUT029 CD

TU M'

CUT CUT026 CD

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Improv player Jason Kahn, an American currently based in Zurich, is known as a percussionist, but his use of live sampling software sets his music at a far remove from traditional drumming. Indeed, save for the gongs and chimes that flesh intermittently like beacons through Plurabelle's studied mix, listeners could be forgiven for thinking this was a work of 'pure' digital. Seven uncut tracks sprawl across an hour of amely drums, basses and crackles. Although the pieces are ostensibly improvisatory in nature, they sound as composed, if not more so, than most programmed underscore. Much of the disc seems on the verge of being rent by a delicate tension, created by the interplay between layer upon layer of loops cycling independently of one another. Kahn's methods may be simple, but his music carries surprising force and weight. Track five, a swirl of distant bell tones and static, sounds uncannily like the nascent growl at the end of *Somebody's* EVDL, while track seven evokes a full field of pinwheels spiraling away, and ominously, out of sync.

The unpronounceable *Tu m'*, made up of Andrea Gabriele, Rossano Pedrini and Emiliano Romani, are an Italian trio, whose tone on improvisation closely echoes Kahn's own. Their crackle and drone could just as easily be attributed to a lone computer musician, but knowing it's an ensemble work piques the ear for the collisions and collusions that are absent from solitary keyboarding. Like Kahn's music, these nonlinear forays into ethereal hisses and phlegm squeaks lean heavily on loops.

Beneath the surface of their highpitched tones and steamy evolutions, minor dislocations suck, drip and chafe, like impotent forces and insipid chemical reactions.

**LARSEN**  
**REVER**  
**YOUNG GOD YG19 CD**

BY JIM HARNES

The incredible story of how Larsen's Rever came into being verges on the stuff of urban legend. But the source of the tale is the album's producer Michael Gira, an unlikely suspect in the arena of public decay. After receiving a series of arcane CDs from an Italian art collective can hemispherical cult called Larsen, Gira was offered big money and a plane ticket to Italy to produce their next album. Intrigued, he took Larsen up on the offer and headed off to Italy upon his arrival, Gira was never allowed to see the group, who shrouded themselves in the studio behind a screen and communicated with him only through their assistants. From what he could ascertain from the assistants' broken translations, Larsen's actions were like some ceremonial rite. Correspondingly, Gira felt less like an active producer than a passive field recorder.

Yet Larsen's hagiographic music for these unknowns suggests a group who are far more interested in Sonc Youth than the archetypes of ceremonial music. Like other American projects such as Unweend and Blends Redhead, they centre their songs around the dynamics of multiple guitars, which may erupt in buzzaw staccato and then glide into sublime aggregated chords. Often in foeliful minor key chords, their guitars interlock into pulsing math-rock grooves, compensated with accendos, trampol blarts, mechanical tape whirrings, teletone rumbles and other rich textural elements. Even in his role as an observer, it is clear that Gira did hold a considerable influence over their majestic yet strangled sound, either as a musical influence or possibly as the designer who fitted the album together as a unified whole. For such a process holds more than a few similarities to how Gira constructed *Swans*: The Great Annihilator.

**LOCUST**  
**WRONG**  
**TOUCH 1061 2XCD**

BY PHILIP BURKHURST

Mark Van Hoen's mid-90s Ambient electronica for R&B/Apolo were largely polished explorations of dark textures and ominous atmospheres, but increasingly he and his collaborating vocalists have moved into dislocated pop featuring lead vocalist Holly Ashton, plus Lisa Milne, Seftel's Saya Peacock, Tera Peterson and Vinny Miller. *Wrong* represents Locust's boldest pop dislocation yet, though it draws more from early 80s R&B than these current chart toppers like Timbaland. "Believe In The One" is an update of the Eurythmics' land blues, run through Ambient's synthetic filter. "Sweet Sky" sounds like Kate Bush blown back to earth via satellite from a helium-spurred, offworld paradise. Likewise, "What Do You Care?", the record's unquestionable highlight, burrowes the voxils in such a cursus way as to suggest orchids blooming on the polished surfaces of George Lucas's *TRON* 138.

Wrong dates back to 1998 but languished in label limbo until 2001; it doesn't sound dated,

however – at least not in the conventional sense. In fact, the time is quite out of joint on *Wrong*. Van Hoen reportedly uses analogue synthesizers to evoke the spirit of the computer music of the 70s, but the vocal treatments – suddenly bright and jawgivingly ecstatic – and the filtered breakdowns combine to create an idiosyncratic sound that doesn't belong to any identifiable era. The sense of dislocation is heightened by the album's format: two discs designed to be played simultaneously. Disc one contains the album proper, but the companion disc of cued up complementary ditties casts a quasidramatic shadow. Aside from the nominal "interactivity" implied, it's not clear what's gained by the use of this format over, say, a surround sound DVD, but the experience of playing the discs together is enough to dispel scepticism

**WILL MENTER**  
**ABOVE AND BELOW GROUND**  
**LEVEL**

RESONANCE RES050 CD  
BY CLIVE BELL

*Above And Below Ground Level* is the second in a series of highly personal solo releases by Will Menter, a British improviser and instrument maker now resident in France. These collections of recordings function almost like an aural diary – Menter's France is an elemental landscape of remote caves, waterfalls, frozen lakes and a windswept hillock where the listener encounters a jingling herd of cows weeping bells. And he treats this environment as though it's there for the musician to play with. On his previous CD, *Celebrating Rain*, he employed a waterfall to play his sound sculptures, tested slate prisms about on a beach entirely composed of slate, and hauled rocks into the echoing clefts of a Victoria underground water abbey. On the new disc he skids ice shards across a frozen lake, an exquisite, ear-splitting sound that I could happily listen to for far longer than the four minutes here.

The other outstanding track has a marimba made of slate played with fingers inside a resonant orb beneath Cluny Abbey. So the disc finishes and also starts underground – the strange opening track places us in a cave deep in the Pyrenees, where a heavily accented tourist guide invites us to contemplate in silence the phantasmic "dates and deserts" painted on the walls. Elsewhere, Menter coaxes gentle ripples from large garden pots, made by his partner from dried earth. Discrete use of a computer transforms his pieces of sound made from rubbing pots or clapping inside their gaping mouths. A nasal bass clarinet joins in – this is the entomophagy, made by Menter in the days when he led *Overlow*, a small but lively orchestra that performed hocketing modutes on plumbing pipes.

This album is likewise full of gentle surprises, as Menter continues improv. Ambient and environmental sound in his own idiosyncratic but very accessible brand.

**RAZ MESINAI**  
**BEFORE THE LAW**

TAZ002 T27151 CD

BY JULIANN CONWELL

Jerusalem-born New Yorker Raz Mesinai records as Badwan. *On Before The Law*, his Middle Eastern commitments and deep dub affinities have, on the surface at least, been put on hold

as he enters the world of Franz Kafka, the Czech Jewish writer whose macabre fables tap so revealingly into the wellsprings of totalitarian oppression. To begin with, the brief title track offers a rapidfire resume of Kafka's ominous environments: the rat at the door, ring of the bell, creaking hinge, chiming clock, shattering glass, crunch of heavy bread. Scrambled laughter heard somewhere in there too. Then edgy instrumental voicings and bursts of electronic sound build images of sinister activity and neuroticistic moods.

In Kafka's narrative Metamorphosis, the ability of protagonist Gregor Samsa's inter to play the violin is a touchstone of shared human value stranded in a bureaucratic nightmare. In Mesinai's rendering, the longest piece in what is effectively a 50 minute suite, Mark Feldman's violin beaks back to a music of community. But, with Jacqueline Louvier's fraught piano and the composer's piano tampering, it also evokes Samsa's terminal isolation, transformed into a helplessly walking insect by the soulless routines of a commercialised society.

Mesinai uses a second violinist, a violist and two cellists on the album. Seizing strong echoes of modernist idiom, his instrumental scores may be a world apart from his other activities, but his skills as sonic designer, processing and editing, deploying instrumental material as samples, play a key role here. And his expressive percussive work is crucial to the intense unfolding of *Before The Law*'s powerful, unresolved drama.

**MONLIGHT**  
**FREE MUSIC**

RAVEN GRAMMOPHON R2023 CD

BY TOM PERCHARD

Monlight is Rune Knuteforsen, owner of Oslo label Rare Grammophon and former member of the 1980s Norwegian electro-pop group Fra Lippo Lippi. This is his second album as Monlight, and as the CD's title might imply, it's an attempt to move towards a sort of semi-structured improvisation, away from the self-described "methodic technique" of his 1995 debut *Knusteforsen*. Reports that much of the music here was made using three synths and some effects processors. The simple set up allowed him to play live while manipulating preprogrammed sequences as he recorded direct to digital. Resulting takes were either kept or rejected, but left unedited.

This simplicity of method and limitation of resources goes a long way towards defining Knuteforsen's course throughout each of *Free Music's* pieces. The musician acknowledges this, especially in the four pieces called "Due Abstraction" where two contrasting elements – lines, gestures or sounds – simply bounce off of each other. The first and most frenetic of the due pieces puts a vendetta of analogue radio tuning against an electronic drip, while a faintly perceptible baseline seems to hum underneath. But the baseline isn't really there. Despite the simplicity of construction, some pieces sound complex enough to imply acoustic details that haven't been played.

In the same way, the Aphex Twin-like "Four Inquiries" overflows a dirty, bitty groove with a high frequency flicker that implies drum 'n' bass chitter. But many of the other tracks are much less opaque, and Knuteforsen's frequently repeated structural procedures do start to pall



**Boiled down to a single CD, Jack Nitzsche's problematic songs and soundtracks shine with a new lustre. Richard Henderson on an American contrarian**

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**JACK NITZSCHE**  
THREE PIECE SUITE: THE REPRISE RECORDINGS 1971-1974  
WARNER ARCHIVES/RHINO HOMEMADE RHM27787 CD  
BY RICHARD HENDERSON

He could have been a contender, and in a subliminal sense, he was: Jack Nitzsche's name was an imprimatur of quality, whether in reference to his abilities as arranger (Phil Spector's girl group records), session musician (the added keyboards to The Rolling Stones' "Play With Fire" and "Paint It Black") or film composer (*Performance*, *An Officer And A Gentleman*). His contributions to "solo" albums by Neil Young and Leo Kottke – blending musical concrete and celestial string arrangements – should have earned Nitzsche billing as a full collaborator. Yet as is often the case with these most truly at home in the recording studio, out of sight means out of luck when kudos is handed out. With any luck, this posthumous compilation (Nitzsche died in August 2000), *Jack Nitzsche: Three Piece Suite: The Reprise Recordings 1971-1974* will restore some lustre to a reputation tarnished by brushes with the law and substance abuse.

*Three Piece Suite...* comprises three sets of recordings made by Nitzsche before he decided to focus exclusively on film music. The first six tracks are from 1972's *St Giles Croplegate*, an orchestral effort recorded at the London church whose acoustic character is marked by singular reverberation. (The church was also the site of the orchestral recording for John Cage's *Academy In Pen*, issued immediately prior to Nitzsche's album). Trading on his arranger credits on Neil Young's *Harvest*, Nitzsche led The London Symphony Orchestra, some 130 members strong, through compositions that alluded to, variously, Broadway musicals, 12-tone rows, Sibelius and the immigrant composers of early Hollywood (especially Bernard Herrmann). The massive ensemble lingers

through melodies that probably needed the sprightly touch of a smaller ensemble, whacking every downbeat with rattle-loosening timpani hits. This did not go down well with Young's fans, or whatever Warners thought might buy in to the idea of neoclassical work from a pop composer. Though the results were scarcely noticed upon initial release, *St Giles Croplegate* symbolised the maverick A&R spirit that set Warner Bros apart from other majors in the post-Hippy era.

Next, Jack Nitzsche was to be the star arranger's debut album as singer/songwriter. The film director Robert Downey (whose *Greaser's Palace* Nitzsche had scored) co-produced and penned cryptic lyrics for seven of the album's 11 tracks. Completed in 1974 and subsequently shelved by Warner Bros, the project was accorded a tantalising description – part Beach Boys, part Kurt Weill – in a *Crowdaddy* magazine profile on Nitzsche from the same year. Quoting Downey's quixotic chorus for "Hanging Around" ("if you believe in a key/Then you believe in a lie"), this citation was the sole evidence of Jack Nitzsche's existence for decades to come.

As finally issued on *Three Piece Suite*, Jack Nitzsche both lives up to its legend and disappoints in nearly equal measure. The album wears its faults on its sleeve: Nitzsche's vocals were no doubt the primary reason that the record was pulled from Warners' schedule. Whether set against sick, big band blues rifts or the walking bassline of "Who Say What To Who" (where, weirdly, his phrasing resembles that of mid-career Iggy Pop), the composer's singing is routinely cringe-inducing. Yet his arrangements are never less than intriguing and, more often than not, inspire lasting awe.

Nitzsche's iconoclastic song structure, made possible by crossfaades and dramatically obvious tape splicing, was episodic in the extreme. His breathless musical eclecticism served him well through the 40



film scores he composed; here, the same quality informs instrumental noisequartets that shimmer into view, then disappear as songs wind down. Foreshadowing his Oscar-winning theme for *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, "I'm The Loneliest Fool" loops an orchestral passage, then segues to a piano solo in elliptical metre. The disingenuous tough-guy lyric of "On The Moodus Run", given way to ragtime piano and Samuel Barber-like horn flourishes above a rhythmic track of trotting footsteps, which, in turn, melts into a vintage shape-note melody realised on glass harmonica. (In his liner notes, Elliot Mazer, producer of both *Harvest* and *St Giles Croplegate*, describes Nitzsche's painstaking approach to recording the latter, tuning several wine glasses by drinking the excess Chardonnay to lower the pitch, then overdubbing individual notes until the piece was complete... and Nitzsche was loopy.)

Despite the cast of session players (including John Fahey), most of these pieces turn upon Nitzsche's own keyboard prowess. Then, of course, there are his strings. Although unsure about his vocal abilities and the merits of his own lyric writing, he always knew that he could, by his own description, "rip your fuckin' heart out with these strings". This was not an idle boast. As first heard on "Memento Tumme" (from his score for Nicholas Roeg's *Performance*) his magical string sound-sounds repeated during *Jack Nitzsche*, a laminate of unison violins, nuanced phrasing and specific microphone placement.

Four demo recordings cut in 1971 round out the album. Two of these, recorded well in advance of *Jack Nitzsche*, are more than equal to the tracks intended for his solo debut. Nitzsche, a brilliant but inscrutable talent, never played these final recordings for his label. As they, too, contain the signature timbre of his string arrangements, Rhino deserves credit for rescuing the final examples of a sound that died with its creator.

over the course of the album. Given the difficulty of the performing set up he designed for himself, that might have been inevitable. What is more surprising, though, is that "Stranded In Narrow Air" and "Still Light", the two tracks that Kratzenstein apparently composed in real time, sound so similar to those he made on the fly.

## MUSICIAN

SPACETIME  
CUNIFORM RUMBLE CD

BY BILL SHODEMAKER

There are moments in every Muojean album where it's plain as day that they are a great group, a rule Spacetime adheres. Granted, being a group entails tactical planning that is all but precluded by the strictures of freely improvised music. Yet group mentality has propelled jazz since before Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, its vitality central to a slew of up-tempo jazz units ranging from The New York Art Quartet to Other Dimensions in Music. Perhaps this is why it's easy to think of Muojean's music as "the jazz as opposed to "improvised music." The collective quartet of saxophonist Paul Dunnell, drummer Tony Levin, bassist Paul Rogers and pianist Keith Tippett has the requisite complementary personae to extend that trajectory though usually much shorter in duration. Muojean's episodes of seismic intensity approach that of Center Of The World (Frank Wright, Bobby Few, Alan Silva and Muhammad Ali), while their investigations of textures and procedures have ample British rigor. As evidenced on these two well-designed, 30-minute-plus pieces, their compatibility and well-honed interplay turn potential liabilities into substantial assets.

Drivinly, constructing extended improvised pieces from multiple takes is a recipe for disaster, particularly when the edit points are as noticeable as those on "Spacetime". Yet, the cut and paste method works best when it is the most obvious. For example, Roger's first solo on "Spacetime" abruptly fades after a few paces from ferocious strumming to a Mingus-like tight song motif. Seconds elapse before Dunnell commences an unaccompanied soprano solo, elongating long hushed tones and poignant pauses into a Laugay statement. It proves to be a viable, perspective-shifting jumpcut, and when the technique is employed towards the end of the piece during another Rogers solo, it creates a structural reification. On the latter occasion, Rogers re-enters with feverish aise textures, triggering a rousing, not quite explosive finale, fuelled by the snap and splash of Levin's crossrhythms, highlighted by Tippett's sprightly lines.

Appropriately, the editing is more seamless on "Exquisitely Woven Spiritual Communication". While the Indian tinge of Dunnell's soprano trills and Lippett's prepared piano markings open the piece dangerously close to pastiche, Roger's admiring sawing and Levin's jabs and swells sharpen the dialogue, setting up the first of several high intensity passages. With Dunnell's soprano in full flight, goaded by Tippett's block chords and right hand runs, Muojean hit their stride, producing a searing heat that ecstatic jazz warhorses can only pray for. What's usually young about this and other similar episodes on Spacetime is their brevity, a measure of free jazz's decades-long tradition of

longform overkill. The wisdom of their concision – which is equally exercised in its most quiet, finely detailed and resolutely non-idiomatic passages – becomes clearer with each replay of the CD.

While this approach to album building stands in contrast with the overtly organic approach of their 1990 live performance debut, *The Journey* (Cuneiform), it does yield the impression that Muojean are a thoroughly collective group. Whereas Tippett was widely seen as the de facto leader at their inception, it would be a very unlikely companion drawn on the base of *Spacetime*. The pianist is now more likely to catch the wave stirred up by the others than to set the piece's tone or usher in sweeping changes midway through "Exquisitely".

Dunnell's breathy tenor phrases initially swirl about Roger's soft sawing, their respective edges sharpening with each phrase. Tippett and Levin enter as Dunnell combats, swaying motion, low Coltrane-style ones and scalar patterns. Lippett deftly slips piano arpeggiations and octaves into the wake of Dunnell's phrases, and seems perfectly poised to take the lead when the latter lays out. But, Tippett defies to Roger, one of a surprising number of instances where the pianist subordinates his expressiveness to the many plot twists planted in both pieces.

Witnessing perturbations and relationships open in longstanding groups is one of the most-honored jazz spectator sport. More often than not, it is hearing how one or two players come into their own that makes the exercise gratifying. Muojean are the rare case where the whole group evolves before your ears on each new recording.

## GORDON MUMMA LIVE-ELECTRONIC MUSIC

TZADIK TZ7201 CD

BY JULIAN CONWAY

In 1973, in his weekly column for New York's Village Voice, Tom Johnson noted that composer Gordon Mumma's objective "is not to create lovely effects, or to convey human emotions, or to create good music in any traditional sense. It has to do with machines communicating with them, playing games with them, trying to accept them, and simply letting them do their thing". Mumma's machines, Johnson added, "are telling us something" and if we can adjust to their wavelength, "the music seems resonating and important". For a long time now such adjustment has been made difficult by the scarcity of recorded documentation of Mumma's singular work. But during that period new technologies and fresh consciousness have produced a sizeable audience for music that engages in such creative dialogue with machines.

Mumma is one of those key innovators whose impact has been felt not directly but through layers of mediation – the stone cast into the water that seems to vanish yet sends out ripples that alter the nature of the pond. Live Electronic Music, following Louis Malle's *St. Thomas* Retrospect (2000), allows the committed and the curious to fish out the stone and experience it firsthand. It's a measure of Mumma's success that, despite all that has occurred musically since then, his music remains challenging, resistant to easy assimilation, ruggedly stimulating and unsettling in ways that matter.

In Johnson's piece and in Richard Henderson's recent interview with Mumma (*The Wire* 216) the soldering iron is mentioned as a basic compositional resource. When no vehicle was available to take the composer to his desired destination he had to build one, hands-on, shitskeles upped. Ingenuity has been one of his strengths, but so too has adaptability and on *Than Portale* (1985), the final track on the new CD, Mumma uses a computer. It is linked, as suits the composer's purpose, to an early synthesizer that approximates (sometimes very roughly) the sounds of acoustic percussion. An actual percussionist, the impeccable William Winant, engages in ironic dialogue with this quirky primitive system.

The four remaining recordings are legendary pieces from the 1960s. *Homage* (1967), heard here in its entirety for the first time, is a solo performance by the composer on washboard and valve-horn systematically transformed and distorted by means of cybersonic devices. On *Mesa* (1966) Mumma subjects the reedy sound of David Tudor's banjoine to cybersonic processing. *Homage* (1965) is a quartet performance. Mumma on the title instrument plus the voices of Robert Ashley and George Caccoppo, cybersynthetically disguised beyond recognition by William Rubin. *Medium Sized* *Mosquitos* (1963) casts a cybersonic halo about Ashley and Mumma's stark piano playing. The word "blycerised" needs a gloss, and Mumma provides one in the sleeve notes: it denotes from the Greek "lyberman" meaning "to stir or guide" while "synthes" from the Latin "sonus", pertains to sound. Mumma's machine-sound, he invents and he navigates, directed by an unisonous vision. Writing again in 1977, Tom Johnson noted Mumma's "preference for success sounds, and his remarkable technical skills". *Live-Electronic Music* provides a much-needed opportunity to sample those and other aspects of his fascinating and important sonic explorations.

## SIMON NABATOV TRIO THREE STORIES, ONE END

ACT 34012 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

It's quite clear from listening to pianist Simon Nabatov's playing that he's a musician who knows a lot of other music. He recently appeared on an ACT recording by the group *Swing Kings*, who essentially pay tribute to the Benny Goodman Quartet. But Nabatov, unshaken by that tradition, felt at ease to gravitate between the lightness of touch typical of Teddy Wilson and dissonant swooshes reminding us that the piano can be 55 tued diams. *Three Stories, One End* plays some equally supplely rhythmic tricks. Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy" and John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" are both coaxed into becoming bolides. "St. Thomas" becomes Sonny Rollins sliced through Dave Brubeck's block chords and Johnny Mandel's "Emily" is given a bassline introduction that sounds like a pastiche of Schenker's *So Far Solo Piano*, Opus 25.

The opening title track is a deceptively charming, Jannet-like waltz that doesn't give too much away about what's to unfold. The atonal introduction to "Emily" therefore comes as an incongruous shock, and it becomes clear that Nabatov works with a composer's mind. His improvisation on Mandel's changes is rudely

interrupted by atonal outbreaks that eventually threatens to snap the structure. Drummer Jon Wimpy outshines Monk's meek tone at the start of the extraordinary reconnection of "Epistrophy", but Nabatov pulls the performance in the opposite direction by playfully manipulating its harmonic structure into a flowing ballad. Throughout, Rainey and bassist Drew Gress attempt to push the pace back to a more natural orbit, but Nabatov won't hear of it.

The spiky, concentrated theme of Nabatov's "For Herbie" implies Nichels rather than Hancock and this is a dazzling performance, full of lousy changes of direction and mindbending logic. As Andy Hamilton pointed out in *The Wire* 214, Nabatov is indeed an unadorned master and each new recording reveals previously hidden aspects of his personality.

## DYLAN NYOKUUS THE SHIELD THAT PIERCES THE EARTH

CREATE RECORDS CRNUKUR LP  
BY DAVID KEENAN

Glamour boy Dylan Nyokus is half of the brains behind Scottish avant-garde outfit *Peak Decay*, aka Desura Pinga, an ever-fluctuating ensemble of non-musicians whose transcendental approach to rap music, not to mention their many semi-nude live performances, enlivens the otherwise faceless underground cassette scene throughout the 90s. Nyokus' first solo vinyl sees his aesthetic mutate further from the early basement noise approach to more fully position itself in this vast uncharted void somewhere between LA Free Music Society-styled electronic wackery, convoluted, fluxus-inspired sound art and sociopathic DIY punk. Still, the sound of utilising warped reel-to-reel seems dominant, with thin, translucent smears of layered sound dancing round the cave walls. The opening "Except From Dead Peephole Vs Smeared On Monkeys Eyeball" limps on a staggered loop of excess that feels beautifully wrong until the cumulative weight of circular sharrow and electronic voice combine to make it feel perfectly right, while "Cly's Festering Lungs" (a deflated acoustic guitar venously stuck, strangled and strangled, sounds like one of American primitive Harry Partch's hobo odysseys reflected to the bus shelters of a Southern English seaside town, "The Lonely Way To Go-Go" is consequently less terrestrial.

Subtitled as a "Variation On A Theme By Neil Campbell" (Campbell being the leader of UK drivelers *The Wasps* cathedral Orchestra), it's a haunting vocal collage based around long one-note icons, leaping and growling about the off/on click of a cassette recorder. It's an otherworldly piece, possessing a gravity that belies its simple construction. Like Col's *Time Machines*, repeat listenings threaten to distort the flow of time. The chemicals may be different but the desolate remakes the same – essentially, elsewhere.

## FRANK PAHL & KLIMPEREI MUSIC FOR DESSERTS

IN POLY SONGS IPS1001 CD

BY DAVID MANOLI

In a collaboration that was clearly meant to be, *Musik For Desserts* brings together Michigan-based composer/multi-instrumentalist Frank Pahl (from *The Wine 208*) and French "yo-yo" ensemble Klimperei (Frangue and Christophe

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Petchstein) All but five of the basic tracks were created using Pelt's homemade automatic instruments, the remainder featuring a hand-cranked antique barrel piano. The automatic instruments employ everything from primitive computers to old sewing machine treadles, in conjunction with multiple bending and plucking devices, to create rhythms and melodies in semi-unpredictable patterns. The compositions are completed in a give-and-take process, whereby the musicians tweak the generated rhythms and melodies to taste while constructing their own parts around what the automatic mechanisms are playing.

Though not as遁世 as their titles imply ("Charlotte Russe", "Lion Fritzes", "Steffie Angelica"), the 18 cuts on *Desertive* are suffused with a delicate, childlike quality — much like Kimpinski's own releases, but with the added roundness of Pelt's gamelan-style gadgets (not to mention his trademark whistling). Very French, and naive in the best sense, they function as full-length miniatures, almost. Sometimes the automatic ukuleles, zithers and glockenspiels merely dominate, pushing the tune's melody into the distance, while elsewhere they drone and buzz in the background, softening the edges of the main theme. While never overcrowded, the sonic spectrum is hump — piano, by guitar, metallocloches, ar organ, chimes, Bulgarian flute, melodica and African harp — and the recording, in gloriously wide stereo, is bright and lush. A wonderfully successful joint effort.

## RADIO BOY THE MECHANICS OF DESTRUCTION ACCIDENTAL PROMO CD BY PHIL SHERIDAN

Electronic music has rarely managed to engage with politics on any meaningful level, outside of rave culture's New Age platitudes or the monologues espoused by independent labels' DIY stance. Bereft of rock and hip-hop's lyrical content, electronic music has been forced to act out strategies of resistance through more abstracted questions of form. Autocore's *Anti EP* (1994) stuck two fingers in the air at the UK's Criminal Justice Bill, which struck at the free-party movement through the criminalisation of repetitive beats, by engineering dance tracks made entirely of non-repeating sequences.

Experimental photographers, walking towards ends very different from dance music's pleasure-centric agenda, have had better luck incorporating the sounds of resistance directly into the fabric of their tracks. Christopher DeLuzio's *NO! Live At The WTO Protest* (1989) was made entirely from field recordings of Seattle's anti-WTO protests, while Los Angeles collective Ultra-red has tackled the United States' anti-immigration policies by receding the sounds of border clashes and the voices of undocumented workers. But Matthew Herbert, a House producer who has increasingly politicised not only his music but also his public persona (including a reading list of anti-capitalist texts on his Website, for instance), is one of the first artists to fuse dance music's seductive rhythms with political photography's confrontational sampling techniques.

*The Mechanics Of Destruction*, released under Herbert's Radio Boy moniker, is a product of its

times (and indeed, one of the few pieces of music one actually hopes will sound dated in ten years) in that every track is sourced from, and tilted after, various icons of globalisation. Herbert's topics, and targets, will be familiar to any reader of texts like *Fast Food Nation* or *No Logo*. McDonalds, Gap, Starbucks, the oil industry. But using the transmogrifying techniques he's perfected on recordings as Doctor Rodot and under his own name, Herbert doesn't so much dehumanise his sound sources as pulverise them into dusty chunks of static, which he then sequences into his trademark, lumbering techno gait. The quality of the tracks themselves — which he has claimed to be of only secondary importance — leads to an intriguing dissonance. While they fit the patterns of dance music, they're too grainy and thin to be effective on a dancefloor, and they're similarly too abrasive and heretic to provide reassuring home listening. The music's generic instability offers a secondary critique, however: unlistenable, of commercialised listening, where pop music's success — that is, its salability — is guaranteed only by the music's conformity to established models of consumption.

Some may argue that *The Mechanics Of Destruction* fails aesthetically, even when it may succeed as propaganda, because Herbert's digital signal processing strips his sounds of any referentiality. You don't actually hear him smacking a pair of Nike trainers against an Adeses drumset, or shredding a copy of the Rupert Murdoch-owned Sun, but only the paedophile explosion common across any number of "experimental" releases today. But a contrary reading is just as compelling. By decontextualising the sounds of globalised capital so radically and rendering them into the framework of "entertainment", Herbert has pointed out capital's vast subculture, its sleuth and decad, as well as our complicity and passivity. He's akin to a lyocook who tells you, with an unkindly grin, that he may have spit in your burger — but only after you've already taken a bite.

## HORATIU RADULESCU STRING QUARTET NO. 4 DAAD R20099 CD BY TOM FERCHARD

Horatiu Radulescu's fourth string quartet bears the snappy subtitle, *For Five String Quartets*. Or *A String Quartet Surrounded By An Imaginary 128-String Viola Da Gamba*. That Renaissance instrument is able to produce a luminous sound rich in overtones, and here the composer has eight overblown quartet parts serving as resonating strings for a central "live" group. On this 1989 recording, the Adriti Quartet supply both live and overblown parts. Radulescu is what they call a specialist, of sorts, working with the timbres and overtones associated with his synthetic, non-temporary scales. But where some other specialists create colourful, delicate and web-like music, the Romanian-born computer whiz instead harks huge, altered flags of sound.

In this piece, the interaction between live and prerecorded music creates two different narratives — one slowly progressing with audible lags, the other forever fleeting, improvisatory and confused. The live material, slow and thick, is gradually transposed up and down a

microtonal scale, its duration and proportions changing accordingly, while the recorded harmonic clouds and hoarse high tones simply linger. Although Radulescu constantly explores different bowing techniques in order to produce varying timbres and harmonic richness, in this recording the piece has a harsh, relentless white sound. No doubt this was Radulescu's design, but the Adriti's characteristic icy violence strips the music of any warmth and resonance it might have had.

In the piece's sound is its identity, as Radulescu works here with a language from which instrumental gesture is largely absent. Only after 15 minutes has the quartet's material evolved enough to let its rhythmic characteristics float to the surface. Even without rhythmic impetus, though, the piece maintains tension — maybe not forward, but up. Moving as slowly as it does, the music builds an unusual tension as it rises to, and reaches, each harmonic plateau.

## REIQ SKETCHBOOK WAGG WAGG CD BY JEROME MAUNSELL

Brighton-based turntablist/graffiti artist Reiq's first two albums for Skim, *One* (1997) and *Frequency Jams* (1998), stuck out a mile from the label's usual product. "This music was made at home," ran the boast on the back of the latter record, and it certainly sounded like it. Legend had it that all the tracks were finished on a humble Tascam four-track. Stuttering, often hopelessly atraphic and out of time Hop Hop beats — which were so inoffensive in the mix they sounded like they had originally been sampled from tenth-generation TDK copies — formed a lackadaisical backbone to a melodic canva of equally rough and ready sounds coming and going with their own arbitrary logic. Sometimes the results were like hearing a clock party half a mile away, with all the sounds of the street dissolving into it.

On this album for Wag, the production standards have been raised a little, though the DIY aesthetic essentially remains present and correct. The title, *Sketchbook*, is a bit of these tracks are at root unassuming, unstructured ditties. The bulk resolve around spare, uncomplicated lines, or ramrod, unswivelled beats, and have the half-there quality of daydreaming. Reiq stays further than ever from anything resembling conventional Hop Hop. He warrows in several beatless, debauch tracks, some of which call to mind Aphex Twin's more outre, offkey moments. There are several highlights — the Eastern, primitive melodies on "Java Bytes", the quartet trilling of "Wagg/Zither", the uneasy Dark Ambient repetitions of "Lighs" — but it's the overall atmosphere that stays with you: intense, diaphanous, fully defined.

While *Sketchbook* is highly likely to bother those who like their beats punchy and polished and their melodies linear and correctly intertwined, there is undoubtedly something charming and unique about it. Reiq is an original, and compared to the sterile facsimiles and often laboured innovations of so much nippy metronomic computer music, his work feels spontaneous, handcrafted, unafraid to do whatever it wants, even if that means the occasional weirdly baroque keyboard flourish.



# Soundcheck

revealing chords. The handpans that accompany the rather jaunty closer, 'Boombahole', possibly fall on the wrong side of taste, but the exuberance dissolves into a magically tented and dreamy conclusion. As Town And Country's move into mellow artistic maturity, Cline is an oasis of sensitive calm from our feistish world.

## VARIOUS ANTHOLOGY 2: COME ORGANISATION ARCHIVES 1981-1982

SUSAN LAVLEY SLCD031 CD

BY JIM HARMES

Wilhelm Bennett chose the sonic path of provocation through his Come and Whitehouse projects in the punk-drunk atmosphere of the late 1970s, when audiences were already having enough trouble coping with the challenges coming out of Throbbing Gristle's death factory. Matched with a confrontational aesthetic of pure shrieking noise, Bennett's mindless manifestations of ultraviolet pornography and his reiterations of the darkest moments from human history continue to generate moral indignation all across the political spectrum. Much to his satisfaction.

If nothing else, this Bennett-compiled anthology of archive recordings from the Come Organisation attests to the constancy of his appetite for outrage. After a brief stint as the guitarist for Essential Logic in the late 70s, he found his notion of punk incompatible with Sex Pistols/Malcolm McLaren's Situationist and marketing plays. Bennett saw punk as a means of transgression with the potential to expose the personal and/or collective excesses of the id. Correctly anticipating the insatiable of leading independents like Rough Trade, Fast Product and Factory, he founded Come as a vehicle for his own projects and those of a few like-minded artists. Taking in Dadaist collages, proto-dooms and the earliest incarnations of his signature power electronics, this second Anthology covers the creative breadth of Come's Bennett-destigated transgressions.

Anthology 2 opens with the whole of Come's final release, the fm Jack album collaboration between Bennett and Jimi Fosset. Their will, which starts off with the stugy guitar pit that has become the staple for groups like Earth, Melvins and Harvey Milk. Intending to 'leave listeners feeling sickened', Come gradually drop unstructured doubleclick drumbeats, before unleashing a squall of painful feedback tones. Tracks pulled from the Come Organisation's only compilation *Für die Kochs* raise the provocation count. The tide cynically parodied Beethoven's *Für Elise*, but it's named after the Nazi Buchenwald concentration camp commandant's wife, who was notorious for her collection of lamps, handbags and books bound in human skin. Bennett's apperception of Koch as a negative icon is an example of his almost logic. Regardless of whether his usage is deemed obscene, pornographic or fabio, whether it's subjectively foolish or objectively analysed, he admiringly refuses to explain it as political or ironic or just art. Rather, he coldly retorts, 'You know you're fucking loony, just admit it.' The 'it' he's talking about is the glimpse he's giving listeners inside their own baggage of giddy desires and prejudices. His shock tactic aims to bring down listeners' defences and force the

recognition of their own hypocritical responses. Anthology 2 passes over *Für die Kochs* framing historical recordings of an Imperial Japanese war criminal, speculating murmur from Aleister Crowley's Charles Manson song and a Heinrich Himmel speech. Instead it uses primitive media cut-ups of unknown like Museu Comunit (sic) and Etat Bist, alongside Maurizio Bianchi's Unintendente SS and one of Naso With Iwao's more psychologically disturbing pieces, 'Fashionista To A Devil Behind A Tree', which collages an abstract dir from sobbing voices and fuzzy guitar drones to back a loop of a German girl pleading for her father.

The energetic Bianchi aka MB (see the Sachen-Petz memo, *The Wre 215*) often sounded like the evil twin of Conrad Schnitzler. Along with his *Für die Kochs* contribution, 'Plastimetro', Anthology 2 features two extended tracks from his second Come album, *Weltanschauung*.

## VARIOUS GOLDEN YEARS OF THE SOVIET NEW JAZZ VOLUME 2 LBO GH452-452 4XCD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Reviewing volume one of this series focusing on Soviet jazz from the 80s and 90s (*The Wre 214*), Ben Watson highlighted his problems with the term 'Soviet New Jazz' and cogently summarised the correlation between what it means to be an artist in a totalitarian society and the resulting sonic humour. This latest instalment largely concentrates on the darker side of that equation.

Oskolstvo's 'Sute Fox Zakanaka' could hardly be darker. The members of the group come from the Zakanaka area of Volgograd, described by vocalist and percussionist Sergey Kassav as a 'clumsy and stark communy body'. The suite has the blakcer than black designation to people of Zakanaka 'who prematurely passed away [through] depression, hashish, alcohol, eaten air and social progress'. The structure of the piece is as brutalised, with creaky editing and jagged edges of tape adding to the impression of an acid, politicised landscape. It opens with the chilling stomp of multi-tracked clavinet flurries from Ravi Asav which turn in on themselves to suggest melodic claustrophobia. The rest of the ensemble play on a collection of percussion instruments grabbed from whatever was hand - well, the group aim to turn 'non-musical sounds' into a 'meaningful whole [with] every sound making sense'. This level of compositional organisation is might count against the music being described as 'jazz', but the piece suggests a whole life of improvised chances and making do. In a final irony Kassav describes how, despite everything, the group are in love with Zakanaka - it may have clogged up their lungs and psyche, but it's fed their creative juices.

If Oskolstvo's aesthetics are derived from suffocating alienation, then the alienation of synthesizer player Mikhail Chekalin has been partly self-imposed. As Leo Fagin reports, Chekalin has 'made it his aesthetic, social and political concept not to conform, mix or collaborate with anyone else' and has worked exclusively on a basement studio in Moscow. The only exception was in 1994: Chekalin's 'Probability Symphony In The Style Of Jazz' was a collaboration with a trio led by Ukrainian jazzman Sergey Hofmann, which featured saxophone Yun

Belenko and drummer Valery Zhol. It's a labyrinth lasting 65 minutes, enhanced by the elaborate sonic landscapes Chekalin weaves from his synthesis. The feeling of infinite space and Chekalin's searching textures are challenged by a rhythmic bunginess and constant asides. Hofmann adds wendy metaling rifts while both Belenko and Zhol feel isolated figures in barren terrain. Belenko has a supremely expressive wailing tone on tenor saxophone and his dialogues is heightened by being placed slightly out of the monophony's range. Zhol's drums rattle menacingly, subverting confident swing.

The Golden Years Of The Soviet New Jazz series is dedicated to the memory of saxophonist and leader of jazz Group Arkhangelski, Vladimir Retsky, who died as the discs went to press. His group was always more of a jazz group as we understand the term, with recognisable solos over chord sequences at either fragmentation or jumping into 'feel' sections. The group have been well documented on Leo (with a particularly fine concert recording from Japan) and the first CD of this set vividly captures the group's 20th anniversary concert. The performance starts with a pithy unaccompanied solo from each player before the ensemble comes together in an ambitious attempt to 'present the full music of our planet through the prism of new jazz'. Birekbe's 'Uniqueness Dance' appears out of nowhere against a background of African and East European folk forms, transformed into a pliable structure.

If Retsky's death brings to an end one of the great Soviet jazz ensembles, then the final disc highlights the talents of the leader of the next generation. Saxophonist Petras Vyisasauskas's approach to improvisation has something of Leo Kandra's fluidity of line crossed with Steve Lacy's robust rhythmic tumultibus. This is the performance with Vyacheslav Ganin and guitarist Gligory Totis - it is masterpiece. Ganin lets beautifully honed accompanying figures around Vyisasauskas's obliquely unfurling lines and they sustain an awesome level of invention for the best part of 40 minutes. Vyisasauskas describes how he once shook hands with Freddie Hubbard and, much to the trumpeter's amazement, burst him with a cigarette. He could burn the fingers of many American stars of his own generation, too.

## VARIOUS A NEW GUIDE TO SOUND SCULPTURE AND INVENTED INSTRUMENTS VOL 1 FMR CD001 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

A well-meeting relative gave me a game for Christmas - a painted wooden tray, it came with no instructions, and no one knew how to play it. I forgot about it until realising this CD. Not that I should have employed the game as a sound sculpture, but this album too comes with virtually no information. Which is odd, when most tracks raise the felt questions: how is that sound produced and what do the instruments look like?

This is a low-budget overview of several veteran sound sculptors, largely compiled from tracks available on other albums. Those who seek information must content themselves with a skeletal track listing (gained three times on the packaging) and some small photos. A long way, then, from the deluxe CD plus full colour book format of Bart Hopkirk's *Debtorless*, Spoon Heys

and *Debt/wphines* on Ellipsis. But there are treasures here too.

It's a while into the record before we encounter a track that can stand on its own two feet musically. Max Eastley and Hugh Davies' opening 'Mela Symphony' is a recording crying out to be properly mixed. Eastley has his feet in the hearers, bowing his one-string Arc through cavernous reverbs, while Davies has his feet in the kitchen sink, plucking and gutting as if painstakingly dismantling a weta. 'Five Thousand Square Feet' may well be a page of Eastley's revolving sculptures in a vast gallery space, but I'm guessing, Hans Karsen Raetje also duets with Davies, and their delicate sound eventually blossoms into the musical equivalent of a sunny garden. Steve Hulbeck makes visually striking games, played here with a swift garnet-style technique.

Percussionists Tim Brooks and Trevor Taylor subject Derek Shiel's metal sculptures to electronic treatment, creating two focused and skilful pieces that considerably extend the range of contemporary percussion. Chee Smith creates intense music from slowly decaying chords, bowing his self-built metal instruments. Meanwhile, the Soschits Brothers, who have been in this game for years, seem to be causing gentle melodies from smoked metal rods. It's futuristic in a swirly retro way, like Spock hammering the Vulcan circles of his childhood.

Quite a shock in this gritted context is Alan Lamb's 'Night Passage', an awesome rocket of angry electricity, lightning slaps and sizzling rumbling. Who needs may recognise Lamb's recordings of half a mile of abandoned telegraph wires in the Australian outback. Others, will stay in confusion as a tiny photo of our man looking like a farmer fixing an electric fence. The final track is an excellent performance of Harry Partch's 'Dark Brother', from the American Festival of Microtonal Music. Partch's prose poem of fervent utopianism is declaimed (great vocals by Johnny Reinhard) over microtonal organ, cello-like strings and other unspecified Partchian contraptions. A dark and visionary music.

## VARIOUS NO MORE... (NO MOUROIR) IN POUR SONGS IP51301 CD

BY DAVID MANOL

No More... brings an embarrassment of riches to fans of French leftfield pop and rock, with music by Pascal Comelade, Pierre Bastein, Kimpens, Look De Bok, L'Ensemble Rigo, Toupak Limonade, Les Bathées and others, as well as an appearance by Robert Wyatt. All the artists involved donated their efforts to this anti-war compilation, the proceeds from which will benefit 'organizations helping civil population suffering from wars and bombs'.

While it's a treat to have a collection that brings together all these great Gallic groups, some of whom (like Loupards Limonade) are heard from all too rarely, there are few big surprises here. Toy pianos, funky xylophones, primitive synthesizers, metaclockas and kazooz abound, with AA Hornet (who have between neo-psychelia and Family Fodder-style pop) offering the only thing approaching straightforward loci instrumentation. Most of the other contributors use the now familiar musical ingredients of the French toy music world: muted trumpets and lo-fi electronic drums (Bastein);

# The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Electric blues: Joe Meek

After the joyous sprawl of last year's 25th anniversary box set, Rough Trade have once more teamed up with Mute to release *Realign Trade Shape: Electrode #1* (Mute CD511002/03 2xCD). There is no narrative concert here, no thematic exploration of a particular aspect of electronic music, just 41 open-ended selections by shop staff that cut through electro, avant garde composition, synth-pop, Techno and strange offshoots from historical reverberus. Chronology is jettisoned in favour stand alone tracks or brilliant juxtapositions between subject matter, sounds and whatever else suggests itself. Early on Red Freeman & The Blue Men (a Joe Meek production from 1960) sing, "I hear a new world/Calling me... how can I tell?/Who's in love for me?" over a weird desert island mix of drums and guitars. As The Mire's Bob Young pants out in his stevenenes, this call came in 1960 when the possibilities of electronic music was just beginning to be explored. It sounds like a message carried across the ether from a long distant past, until it crunches up against Oval's "Karlsland", where the similarly distorted electronic tones echo tropical harmonies and rhythms. Another favourite segue is the eternally weird Raymond Scott's shiny-happy advert about memories of headaches followed by Schneider TM's wistful cover of The Smiths' "There Is A Light That Never Does Go Out", tracks like Can's "Want More", New Order's "SOS", LB's cover of IB's "Superbod", Kevin Bleckton's "Peanuts" and, most of all, Bruce Haack's perverse "Mean Old Devil" keep the mood upbeat, infecting you with more 'sourness' compositions, like Henry Mancini's Atelier, Fannex's "OL", John Cage's Radio Music (Edit) or D's "Funk", which have a kiththeaded ring to them. In this context even Nair's brutal, unsmiling "Out Out Dut" has a certain charm. The title Electronic #1 implies that this is just the first in a series. Let's hope there are many more. (RHS)

**True Spirit** (Tesor 56185/6 2xCD) follows a rather less discursive path through the annals of electronic music. Chipping away the best tracks from the label's ten years at the forefront of dancefloor Techno, True Spirit can't help but be single-minded, but this gives 'relentlessness' a new definition: a war of attrition comprised of punishing drums, brawling oscillator riffs and classic Berlin pounders like Maserati's "Lyric" and Vangelis' "Lyric", and the same damn textures, track after track after track. The only respite comes from Eddie "Rashin" Fowles, Dexy's, Neil Landstrum and Crisssie Vogel. Old classics like X-101's "Sonic Destroyer" and Brixton's "Dive More Deep" (Red Planet Mid) sound distinctly

undistinguished in this company and make you wonder why Harthouse was so committed from the church of Techno by Derrick May all those years ago. (PSha)

A more contemporary yet benign, if no less singleminded, overview of Berlin's music scene (with a couple of singers like Arto Lindsay and People like Urs) is provided by *[Kraut]erLaden! Presents Ocean Club* (WMFREC 62708 2CD). Compiled by Gudrun Gut and Thomas Fehrmann, the album concerns itself mostly with sing-songy, often gravity-free electronics from Barbara Mergenthaler, Robert Lippe, Cluster, Coover Music, etc. There are also tracks from Seelenzettel (essentially Thomas Brinkmann appending a synth riff that sounds like the guitar riff from Bob Marley's "Could You Be Loved" to a loop from Deader Human's "Life On Mars") and Round Three featuring Tchamak singing on top of what may be the most rounded Techno-dub of his entire career. (PSha)

It's been a busy couple of months for *[Kraut]erLaden!* *[Kraut]erLaden! Presents Native Lab* (WMFREC 627011 2CD) is a compilation of artists who have appeared at Berlin's Native Lab events, which are sponsored by Native Instruments, the company behind the ubiquitous Reaktor audio software. At the usual suspect are here — Jake Mandel, Richard Devine, Erosivinity, you know the flavour — but at least a few have found some decent tracks in their mountains of ADIs to throw *[Kraut]erLaden!*'s way. Kid606's "Dance Dre Why You Always Hating On Me" may very well be Dre thrown in a vipers' nest of glitches, but it actually sounds like what a Molten Lava player and an Egyptian old player might produce if they duetted on DSP software. FX Reindeer's "Danun" is the LSD with Max patches on their dinner jackets, while Madvillain Delay shakes his Cubist groove on "The Super Has Left The Model". (PSha)

Brian may be a nation of habitual gall-poppers and newly refined cannabis laws, but it's been a long time since it produced a half-decent drug song. *Dope & Glory* (Inkpot US0295 2xCD), on the other hand, follows on from the German archive label's great.

Flashbacks #1: High & Low, Drug Songs from last year with 50 songs from the 1930s and 40s devoted to Texas Tea. The salacious joy and oily humour of nearly all of these swinging ne'er-do-wells made after the FBI and police shut down Harrison's 1200 hash bars by such jives as Merv Mezvow, Fats Waller, Hissen Lathorne, The Harkham Hamfats, Carl Calloway, Stoney Bechet, Frankee Hall Pint Jeers, jazz Gillum and The Cedar Creek Shiek, among many others, is perhaps the best argument against the liberalisation of drug laws there is. (PSha)

It would be easy enough to dismiss director Wes Anderson as irritatingly precious for lumping the following artists together on the soundtrack album for his tale of deranged child prodigies, *The Royal Tenenbaums* (Hollywood 206182347 2CD): Nos, Bob Dylan, The Ramones, Nick Drake, The Velvet Underground, The Yseya Quartet (Ravel's String Quartet in F Major), neglected multitrack pop avant-garde Enrich and the Vince Guardi Tko (doing that Peanuts cartoon Xmas theme). Fortunately, the director continues his working relationship with Deva Leonoff Mark Mothersbaugh who scored Anderson's first two releases, *Bottle Rocket* and *Rushmore*. Using much the same tonal palette (cello, harpsichord, brushed trap set) and holding his own penchant for knowing humor in cheek, Mothersbaugh nails both the children's book whimsy and the dashed hopes at the core of this whimsical film. Though Anderson's success has earned him a music budget sufficient to obtain the label's share of his own record collection for screen use, none of the licensed music has anywhere near the potency of Mothersbaugh's original themes. Hardly devolved, and worlds apart from the composer's other film-oriented work, his music is, by turns, gossamer light and as rackety as Raymond Scott. (RHS)

The French Active Suspense label's inaugural compilation, *Visible Access* (Active Suspension AD1 2CD), collects a dizzy array of styles, ranging from electroacoustic improv to happy-go-lucky digital sketchy, and introduces several names worth watching. Echoes of brand name experimental pop can be heard, but nothing feels derivative: Shiner's gorgeous "Tu Me Marques" begins with Fennesz's strated growl but gradually morphs into a stuck-necked organ figure. Domestik's "Some Things to Be Aware Of When Mastering Digital Audio" might read like an early Ode to Ode, but its careful overlay of skips and plangent melodies displays a Romantic sensibility when to most click + cuts music. Artists like Osaka and Enzre have close to post-rock moxie, while Olammi and Dennis Musale apply a gleefully scattershot approach to digital collage. (PSha)

Frankfurt's Raum...Musik, home to artists like Dub Taylor and D Giger, has been behind quality Tech-House releases for several years now, and the label's fourth compilation, *Presentiert #4* (Raum... Musik MUSK029 2CD), you can't help but feel that something has got to give. Individual tracks have their merits — Dick Harris' "Output" weds a funky, offtime bassline to the standard boom-boom pattern, and David Taylor's "Con-fusion" were itself down with a drizzle of filtered glches — but the overall sense of a style that's been coaxed and can't find its way out. The bouncy, two-chord wash is the

most obvious culprit, but as one seems able to shake it, Lioht & Scherzer's jazzy "You" is the lone exception here. As a Rhodes-driven, Deep House cut, it doesn't exactly suggest a way forward. (PSha)

The same can be said of *Alone Latinas: Electroacoustic Music From Latin America* (Loruit LNT113 CD). Wagner described Meyerbeer's extraneous operas as "effects without causes", and the electroacoustic effects that dominate these compositions from the last decade seem equally unmotivated. "Gate's Raid" for marimba and electroacoustic sounds by M Rosas Cobian "represents the composer who goes out on a limb through the music and images of his many lives" — but unfortunately forgets to create any meaningful tether from them after their return. Many of the contributions, though born in Latin America, have moved to Europe. Agustín Fernández is one of these, and his tape piece, "Silent Lovers", is one of the more successful, resisting the easy pursuit of effects. The "brief sonorous landscapes" of Gabriela Ortiz's "Five Micro-Exacts" each treat a specific musical question, again in a thumbnail sober way. But nothing here leaves you with the impression that Latin American studios are bursting with electroacoustic inspiration. (AH)

It's not all doom and gloom from the Southern hemisphere, however. The artists collected on *New Zealand Scene Art Vol V* (Urinet Works UWMD1201 2CD) at least manage to reconcile order and texture. Daniel Beban's "Herkies" is the most ear-catching piece here, collaging guns, moans, and dropped barrels from weightlifting events. "Herkies" successfully evades both the standard palette of electroacoustic composition and any hint of toilet humour novelty. Blewhears, Kit Powell creates an opiated portal out of size recordings from a metal foundry, while Craig Snelgrove builds a house of mirrors out of juxtaposed recordings of birds and the London Underground. (PSha)

Out of the academy and into the bedroom, *Far Friends* (Inkpot/Audio Dregis ADR04/070M05 2CD) collects the wistful electronic scribbles and dairy entries of bedouin produces the world over. Most of the album is comprised of tiny, fragile, often bleeped electroacoustic, suggestive of lonely walks and bad childhood memories. It's all very nice and unassuming in the same flat flower kind of way, but the standout track is "Gemini Disc" by London's Exh Sun, something like Ode & Neutrino in dub, sung by your autistic four year old niece. (PSha) □ Reviewed by Ben Borthwick, Andy Hamilton, Richard Henderson, Peter Shapiro and Philip Shetname



LEO RECORDS

Music for the inquiring mind  
and the passionate heart

## LEO RECORDS NEW RELEASES



CD LR 334  
PANDELIS KARAYORGIS / MAT MANERI QUINTET  
DISAMBIGUATION

Mat Maneri and Pandelis Karayorgis lead a quintet featuring an impressive line-up of some of the most creative musicians working in New York today, Tony Malaby on tenor sax, Michael Formanek on bass and Randy Peterson on drums. In the liner notes Kevin Whitehead writes: "Disambiguation" succeeds on that rarefied level where compositions, orchestration, improvising strategies and individual talents all work toward a unified effect... This is what jazz should be like at the dawn of its second century: deft and complex without making a big fuss over either quality."



CD LR 335  
STEVE COHN  
THE BLAIR RECORDINGS

On his second CD for Leo Records, Steve Cohn, the man who has been called "the great hidden secret of American jazz," goes it alone. He has his collaborators Blair Hardman and Johnnie De Robertis on a couple of tracks, but on the rest of the CD he is on keyboard with multi-track overdubbing, shakuhachi, hichaku, shofar, percussion. He also improvises his crazy monologues while playing on instrument. Totally original and unique.



CD LR 336  
MATTHEW WELCH  
CEOX NUA

A debut recording by the incredibly talented young composer/conductor/instrumentalist and Anthony Braxton's pupil and collaborator Matthew Welch, who writes opuses and symphonies for bagpipe and orchestra and performs them with Janacek Conservatory Orchestra in Czech Republic. His Symphony of Drones has been recorded at the Wesleyan University by an orchestra of fifteen musicians who are the next generation of stars of new music: Jackson Moore, Steve Lehman, Chris Jonas, Rees Archibald, to name just a few.



CD LR 337  
LAUREN NEWTON / JOELLE LEANDRE /  
URS LEIMGRUBER  
OUT OF SOUND

This CD has been in the making for a long time. Everything should have been right: the ambience, the mood, the sound, the studio, etc. And at last it happened. As Francesco Martirelli writes in his notes: "They will burn music away from your ears, tear apart your ideas of music and rebuild it again in a different shape... Thanks to Lauren, Joelle and Urs for giving us a chance to accompany them in their quest, and for setting us on our own."

far-gound organ and goofy Adonis-style vocals (Tzortzis Limerode), children's percussion, saxes and mutated Easy Listening melodies (Wimpers), who contribute no fewer than six tracks, as well as a collaboration with Beaten). The collection also includes oddball scrapyard blues by the duo Oedipus, and the pulsating, This Heat-like live recording from Les Bateaux is one of the set's rare dark moments.

French jazz-rock genius Albert Mangeneau provides the sleeve notes, but also, no musical contribution, and the CD booklet is completed by illustrations from Moulines, Paquette Boîte, Caroline Sury and Wyatt. Wyatt also makes the compiler's only explicit political reference, reworking his pro-Palestinian tune "Donedstan" to protest the war in Afghanistan: "Afghanistan's a country, or at least need to be" difficult to imagine No More raising much money, but the cause is worth supporting, and the music is a must for Francophiles.

### VARIOUS NOT NECESSARILY "ENGLISH MUSIC" ENGLISH/LEO MUSIC JOURNAL EMC0063 2XCD

BY JULIAN CONWELL

Composite Nicolas Collins has edited a test issue of *English Music Journal* that addresses currents in British experimental music between 1960 and 1977, and he invited David Toop to compile this audio anthology. *Toop* was extremely active in diverse areas of music during the latter half of that period, yet he is a cautious curator, wary of the paradox of conserving the exploratory and alert to the perils of subjective bias and faulty recollection. On the other hand, he recognises that a lot has subsequently been thrown that forth and inadequately documented phase of musical investigation. Michael Nyman's book, *Experimental Music* (first published in 1974), mapped out significant parts of the picture, accounts of free jazz and improvising have added others. *Toop* adjusts the perspective and highlights some crosscurrents.

Familiar coordinate points appear as well as long submerged features. *AMM* are heard at the Royal College of Art in 1965, a judiciously chosen track illustrating the group's creative use of silence, when leaves tangible into the room. There's disparate ensemble work by Michael Nyman's Cembalo Band, The Search Orchestra, Spontaneous Music Ensemble (including Toop), the strangely overlooked People Band, electronic group Intermodulation (featuring composers Roger Smalley and Tim Souster) and Gentle Fire (including instrument maker Hugh Davies), a jazz outfit led by guitarist Mike Cooper and two featuring drummer Pauley Perry with Chris McGregor on piano and trumpet. Monges Fesa Toop is heard playing electric guitar alongside drummer Paul Bunnell as strobis with sound poet Bob Cobbing, and as free rock duo Rain In The Face. He has relived the sounds of Miss Eastby's sculptures, idiosyncratic and oddly present performances by Steve Beresford, duo improvising by guitarist Peter Cusack and clarinetist Simon Mayo, solo soloists with Hugh Davies and Frank Perry and a fine sample of Urs Leimgruber work with pianist Steve Miller. There's a duet for one-stringed banjo and water clyster by ensemble Pink Floyd associate Ron Geesin, a glimpse of BBC Radiophonic Workshop pioneer Daphne Oram in

action, a peculiar recording of Cornelius Cardew accompanying soprano Jane Manning at the Purcell Room in 1974, lush piano minimalism from Robert Worsley, and reaged electronics from Rambut Glawilti. Only two tracks are available elsewhere on CD: an improvisation from Derek Bailey's Solo Guitar Volume 2 (Inoxus) and a solo by drummer John Stevens which has surfaced on FMF's *Improvising Percussionist* compilation.

The selective archivist's task is rather like timing sand to shine torchlight down a gloomy corridor. A few meaningful features are picked out but a lot is left hidden. That's one of the inherent imperfections of such a project but it's equally a flaw of well-established histories. The anthology, without settling upon anything so nebulous and convenient as a zengen, testifies to nearly two decades of lively and varied musical research. Due to technological limitations, the clarity of some recordings is less than pristine. Still, the music filters through and conveys a shared belief that something different and worthwhile could be brought into the world. Obviously musical research didn't simply cease with the onset of Thatcherism. It persists despite current orthodoxy that everything that matters already exists, waiting to be packaged seductively and assigned its proper place in a league table. The music on *Not Necessarily "English Music"*, with its slum site and often raw sound, affirms the necessity of outboxy.

### VARIOUS UNKNOWN PUBLIC: TALKING DRUMS UNKNOWN PUBLIC UP12 CD BY ANDY HAMILTON

Versatile British percussionist Paul Davis is guest editor for the last edition of the audio zine *Unknown Public* to appear in a brown cardboard box before it's replaced by a CD/book format. *Talking Drums* deals with percussion not just as a groove foundation, but as melodic discourse – as it does in Clare's own still underrated work, *UP12* opens with Moonlight's edit, enchanting "Viking I", from the album *Aloneing* in Europe, with Luis Hardin aka Moonlight on percussion and celesta. The more ambitious "Peas Of A Mirror" by the New Cline Ensemble is an eventful, imaginative exploration of percussion and vocal sonorities from their 1999 *Cryptogramophone* album. Its delicate, folk-inflected chamber jazz is dedicated to the late pianist Robert Creechman.

Brian Ferneyhough's wonderfully bleeped *Bene Alphabet* features evne solo percussion played by Stephen Schick in contrast, The Glazier Trio's whimsical version of "My Bird Of Paradise" is an affectionate sussension, replete with bird noises, of the Irving Berlin song from their *Rara Avis* album. *Miner Wandz* was born in France, but spent his childhood and adolescence in Cameroon. Conceived as a mesh for a dance group, his haunting "Urban Steps", from *Rhythms Of Life*, mixes Hip Hop beats with high register pipessounds to set an encounter between urban industrial sounds and African rhythms. Tenso and like Men's sparse "Death Mask" for electronic percussion and voice is another delight. *Audie* from Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation*, which is too well known to surprise here, this edition proves one of the most unified and rewarding UP concepts, resulting percussion works as well as exposing the obscure and under-explored. □

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# Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

Three inches of pleasure: Burton's *Hot* and Hot Air's *Summertime Lullaby* (Hearing Art).

**Avtar** are a young New Zealand quartet composed of a drum kit, two organs and a banjo. I've been led to understand that some of their work is extremely conceivable, but truth is not the case with *Freelovers/Collective March* (Crownspike Artist Series 3.1 B") Although both tracks cleave to central rhythmic motifs, neither of them is offensively beat-oriented, and they unspool their sounds in a way that is much too spacious for most (if not all) gravity-bound shuffles to follow. This is very much in the lovely experimental tradition of Crownspike's earlier Artist Series, and would make an excellent addition to any respecting shelf of B" discs (BC)

According to the notes, the sounds on *Joe Colley/Craig Ulatt's Clay Sound* (Meine Musik MM2020 17") were generated from a bucket full of ceramic clay, absorbing water. These notes go on to add that there was no subsequent manipulation of the sounds, but it's hard not to be a little sceptical, especially when the record's on a label as genuinely whacko as this one. Still, Colley's reputation and previous recordings have roamed all over the map without a hint of procedural scandal, so perhaps we should take him at face value. What this new record actually sounds like is a collage of lo-fi loop tapes generated either by sequencers or field recordings, slowly decaying in the noonday sun. Regardless of its source, the sample is pretty nice: diffuse noise, rubbing against the edge of your ear like a pair of too tight shorts. (BC)

*Zingin' Wir Uns Auf/ym* (Gemeinschaft GW14/kB02 7"), on which [Mutter] propose to loot the closet of pop music readymades, is a bit more engrossing than some of their frostier form shifts. On the A side, their plodding gives the proceedings a more inert edge than one expects from them. On the B side, things are more languidly atmospheric, allowing guitars shapes to sweep slowly across the foreground in a way that may or may not be a tribute to the late Florian Fricke (although it's really done in a style that probably owes more to Manfred Göthrich). (BC)

**David Snapper**/*guitar* 2/3s Of A Tovel (0806 01 CD002) contains two pieces by Robbie Carty, presented in a most hideous format. Despite the presentation, the stuff here is classic 0806: brain-popping dips between television-defined realities, done in classic tapestitch style. I assume that this was actually achieved with contemporary technology (sampling and so on), but its heart is still made of pure glue, and it is a raw thrill to hear new work from a stalwart first introduced to Europe via the vaulted *Wurst With Wound Inst*. (BC)

Peter Scanlon has become known over the past

few years as one of the leading lights of the Scandinavian acid folk underground, as the trudging textures of *Personen Aver Is Her Heart/Akone And Forsaken* (Chameleone 001 7"), the debut single by his current group *Pangaea*, is something of a surprise, albeit a pleasant one. Pangaea's sound is crude, with an effervescently lyrical dimension that gives their garage fever an aura of credibility that as many of their peers lack. The Hank Williams cover on the B side might seem like an odd choice, but it's played as a tongue-swallowing, sad-god belated in a way that would have done the Pinted Shit Show proud (BC)

**Random Number**'s side of the split 7" *It's Time/Haney/River* (Fencing Fawn/FM 7") is a fast screeched mess, mashes of beat rapidly broken with snarl, jangly notes of sonic detail fed, and vocals speed-mumbled into late-right pillow. **Straight Edge** *Ngengula's* track combines collapsed (or is that *collapson*?) electronic constructions with fast sonic blasts and a voice that sounds like it comes from a tree. Heard in these small snippets, the music seems like it would be about perfect for some sort of weird, underground drug party, but I'm so far overage that it's not funny (BC)

**Mike Rep & The Quatos** are one of these most mysterious groups whose germination point was in the pre-dawn of the American punk boom. Similar in certain ways to The Electric Eels, The Lone Wolves from Hell, The Scaremn' Mees Mees and Destroy All Monsters, The Quatos invited up a riotous blend of style regulations that hinted at the post-Panthers mass to come. Using 60s punk as a stylistic base, this Columbus, Ohio group recorded their maniacal snarls onto eight-track cartridges, and it is a real treat to hear it in a quarter century hence on *Mama Was A Schizo* (Hiccup Hiccup A Vegetable Mart/Rocket Music CD). Old Age, Average Age (003 7"), weeping its warts on its sleeve, and Beckoning for all of us to enter a vortex of weird from which there is no escape. (BC)

**Snapper's Hammerhead/Dy Spot** (Crownspike SHM001 10") contains two live tracks from a great wall-of-shit New Zealand group who haven't released a new record in so long that it presumed them to be defunct. Instrumentally comparable to Australia's Scientists at their most monstrous, Snapper's sound is a huge headrush of Scream'n'bang produced by overloaded guitars, a machine-driven organ, and the Neuf! like pulsing of drummer Mike Dooley (who long ago caused New Zealand's legendary *Tey Love*). The vocalists exist in a moshed exosphere beyond the land of tongues, and the whole is as wet as a mouth (BC)

*Say No* (Lorebox Recordings LBT009 3" CD)

is a very interesting, extremely minimal collection of works by the Chicago-based sound artist **Adam Sonderberg**. There are some collaborations on portions of this, but it seems genuinely the result of Sonderberg's thinking about Cagian sonic diets. The sounds explored are those of civilization's natural environment, empty rooms, electricity, water and cyclic hums. This little CD doesn't really deal with any radically new themes, but it handles the ones it chooses with a beautiful clarity of vision. (BC)

*Hiking/Wing* (Lilacrop Boy 01-B00D02 7") is another blissful, happy electronic record by **Neukawa Takanawa**, best known for his marriages of beats and bleeps. As with the work he records under the moniker Child's View, this material answers a naiive query with the music of Beat Happening or Coo Coo Rocket Time, but unlike the work of those artists (whose material is unterred with a scarcely defined but definitely taggable darkness), Takanawa's stuff has a sunniness that is difficult to overthink. When may be the point. (BC)

*Mama You Been On My Mind/Pine Tree* (Aviword Silence AVI000010 7"), a split single that pairs Dave Pago's *Papa* 10 with UK post-rockers *Unihane*, is indeed a marriage made in heavens. While Pago awkwardly achas his way through a perfunctory piano intro to Bob Dylan's masterful "Mama You Been On My Mind", a track quickly dropped from 1964's *Another Side* of Bob Dylan, Unihane's "Pine tree" shamelessly tributes Pago as it conceives his instrumental work with both Sint and Tertesse. Nice concept. (DK)

**The Poly Shang Xuan Baod/Smack Music** 7" is unitled and out on Ecstatic Peace (EB03 7") presents two of Karen Constance's (aka Karen Lolytop) tape music experiments. While not many people will recognize her as the wife and collaborator of Rick Deacy's Dylan Nyukis, her approach to sound is every bit as conceptually weird as her husband's. The Poly Shang Xuan Baod sees her working with one Cecile Gilbert, manipulating to begin language cut-ups in a style that's every bit as disturbing as Robert Ashley's language pieces, while Smack Music 7 presents a more textual approach, with cheap, bloping, computer noises and repeating concert loops that create a sublimely sick sound space. (DK)

Whenever troubled songwriter **Daniel Johnston** hooks up with a group, the warning signs inevitably go off: Johnston always sounds best alone, whether weeping into a piano or struggling with heartbeating guitar chords, but Savin' Is Easy (Pickle Egg EGG033 7") works fine, teaming Johnston with a guitar, bass, drums and synth trio who travel by the name of Slow Death Vs The Instant Coffin. The title track features a distraught vocal from Johnston, as usual

despairing over human vanity and the inevitability of death to the accompaniment of some faintly generic indie rock. "Prayer From The Depths" is a bit noisier with rumbling, distorted bass bolstering his plorts for beautiful women, cigarettes and deliverance from aliens (DK).

The New Zealand free noise trio of bassist Kim Petters, guitarist Bruce Russell and drummer/radio operator Peter Stapleton, **Peters/Russell/Stapleton**, have previously cut two raging, form-destructing CDs, *Lies* (Glass on Corpus Hennemus and Sex/Machine) or *Metamorphosis: Cold Sweat/War Songs* (Ecstatic You! Ec4/PYPS14 7"), a limited edition single released as part of Byron Coley and Thurstos Moore's *Just Another Ass Run* series, provides a focused blast of their cities' reclusive live power. "Cold Sweat" is a gleaming outtake from *Sex/Machine*, a stacc. teeth-clenching dron, while "Max Songs" features the gleefully unintoned vocals of Bruce Russell's son Max, howling in triumph as the two make with some of the heaviest rock moves of their career (DK).

1991's *Summertime Lullaby* (Hats As Outlaws By Government (hot Air ADDRESSER06 3" CD)) is credited to Ebeng Ling, and Jalan Bunti, but you don't need to listen to the flagrant ganjalan outtro to realize that this is the work of **Naif Ware**, not two Indonesians creating an "homage to these strong willed women who chose to risk death in embracing new ideas and forms from outside their culture". The processless cover art (Notung, et. Sumatra ladies wearing hats) and brilliant pess-tape sletermines should tell you all you need to know. A long overdue update to the earnestness of World Music, and Field recording and folk preservation onces. (PS)

Another beautiful package, **Bulbul's Web** (Trost 0070 7" CD) is a collection of sounds made by bicycles and subsequently fashioned into five up-tempo clickspins. But Bulbul not being Kalfwerk and this being say "Trot De France", the usual problem with such projects applies—lacking any sort of sonic referent, these sounds could just as well have been created by anything—but most vexing is that too much of the 7" is reminiscent of "Flight Of The Bumblebee" as composed for a symphony of Max patches (PS).

Despite the presence of Nech-oh-ee queen **Manuela Krause** on *Mein Freund Der Baum* (Mentika 08 3" CD), Stefan Beyer aka **Pole** is up to his old tricks. Although there are no crackles and the synth/meditation background could be from a Vangelis Clarke romp or Gorillaz, the dub elements are as radically structured as anything he's done since his first album. It makes you wonder why Pole's not more in demand as a treated producer (PS). *Reviewed by Byron Coley, David Keenan and Peter Shapiro*

# The Boomerang

Recent reissues: rated on the rebound



Get your yo-yo out: Brigitte Fontaine

think of French female vocalists of the 60s and images of bubblegum yé-yé cuties like Sylvie Vartan, Francoise Gall and Francoise Hardy inevitably come to mind. Emerging at the tail end of the yé-yé movement, and representing just about everything it seemed to negate, was a singer who may well have been the strongest distaff vocalist not to have come out of the blues/gospel tradition. Although she's been active since the late 60s, the extraordinary **Brigitte Fontaine** is only now being discovered by adventurous non-Francophiles — a gossipy which should be accomplished by the release of four of her albums from the 60s and 70s. Her 1968 debut, *Brigitte Fontaine Est... (Savannah SHL1011 CD)*, was arranged by Jean-Claude Vannier, the musical brains behind the foundation stone of European psych-funk, Serge Gainsbourg's *Histoire De Melody Nelson*. Featuring a restrained Fontaine, *Brigitte Fontaine Est...* is not quite as giddy as Gainsbourg's masterpiece, yet it contains some remarkable music, warpath congas meeting Marlene chomping on "Excellente", some delicate piano-Björk moments on "Comme Rimbaud", and Fontaine rescuing a variety of woes arrangement on "Le Beau Canard". Her legend largely derives from her next album, *Comme À La Radio* (Savannah SHL1018 CD). Recorded with The Art Ensemble Of Chicago and her longtime collaborator, Atsushi Bekkison, in 1970, *Comme À La Radio* is quite simply sui generis. Fontaine spends much of the album extoling her Rimbaud-like lyrics in a variety of voices (jaunty, detached, positively Medea-like) against a sparse backdrop of congas or unaccompanied bass. Unlike The Last Poets, say, these aren't the drums along the Melchuk Declaration war on the compositions, but simple textures that both frame and work with her awkward limbs and phasing. When honing horns or 'ethnic' instruments enter the mix, they haunt the background like spooks. Recorded in 1973, Fontaine's fourth album, jointly credited to Atsushi & Comme Pas Comme (Savannah SHL1010 CD), is almost as good. The horns have largely been replaced by sombre strings and flutes, the guitars and Magneplex percussion take a leading role, and though some of the arrangements wouldn't be entirely out of place on a James Brown album, this is still challenging, heady stuff. And like Fontaine's sound like Cesaria Evora and Gal Costa outshining all the world explores around them on "C'est Normal", "Dis-Moi" is like one of Henri Rousseau's rainforests erupting into sound; and "Le Moulin" could be a "Dueling. Sountracks" between Bernard Hermann and Elmer Bernstein. 1977's *Vous Et Nous* (Savannah SHL2077 CD) begins with a rail-like vocal

arrangement over a mechanizing Moog, before breaking into a six minute anti-patriotic debrief on top of the kind of overbearing synth-funk you'd find on a 70s porno soundtrack. Atsushi then takes centre stage with Breton sailors' ballads alternated with sparse guitar and beach arrangements and songs about camel eating habits. [PS]

"Reckless, absurd, disgusting" is how Algerian gun runner Arthur Rimbaud described his earlier career as a poet. **Richard Hell** might derive his surname from Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*, but he has never disguised his own contribution to the invention of punk's nihilism and distressed T-shirts as popularised by Johnny Roten. *Blues Generation* means Hell's claim on posterity, but time (*Matador 01530 2920*) makes a worthwhile footnote: it's essentially New York cassette label Rei's R&B mix-up compilation debased with a 1977 recording of The Voidoids live plus extra tracks. Among the three tracks from Hell's stint with John Thunder's respect *Heartbreakers* in 1975 is their early version of "Love Comes In Spurts", which reveals how the song's association of love with premature ejaculation, its subversive shock element, came later, so to speak. The *Heartbreakers* version marks a mid-point between the hardcore romantics of Iggy Pop and Roten's fascinated repulsion of the physical. The remainder of the double set, with the exception of a 1963 version of The Cramps' "I Can Only Give You Everything", features Robert Quine's guitar, which is reason enough to listen. The energy expended by Quine and Hell is the live set from London's Music Machine in 1977 — reminds you why sets only lasted 20 minutes in those days. How ever "Lies Beware" opens with squalls of noise and feedback before hurtling into a mangled wreckage of guitar chords. The tracks from the 1975 benefit for the St Marks Poetry Project are sedate by comparison, the urgency tangible drained. Highlights of the studio material are early takes of songs that ended up on the second Voidoids album, *Destry Street*, the Dylan-style "Time" and a cover of Dylan's "Going Gonzo". Both read like retirement robes. [DW]

By 1979, Hell was already continuing punk by other means. Between leaving DAF and joining Oer Kan, electroacoustic player Kurt Dahlke aka **Pylotar** recorded a fine solo debut, *Irland* (Ata Tak WTR79 CD). If as instrumental structure and the suggestion *Pylotar* was reformulating punk protest as voluntary internal exile, his evocative pre-Ambient impressionist snapshots argue otherwise. Recorded on an early Korg MS20, his synth-drawn and sequenced metallic tone poems, spiced with snatched voice tapes, articulate punk's euphoric sense of its own

empowerment dissipating in the acid rain of German reality in the wake of the previous autumn's terrorist cell deaths, nuclear protests, Cold War fears... By definition gimmersque music seeds its own regeneration, and *Pylotar* himself soon lunked up the road with his Headbutters-inflected follow up, *Ausland*. [BK]

**Current 58's** *Live At Bar Maldoror* (Barco 001 CD) isn't really a live album, rather, it's a huge collage piece, assembled from the ambient glow of choral synthesiser choruses of plausing and mile-long choruses, all rendered waste-like in Steve Stapleton's studio treatment. More formless and less focused than the preceding *Dog Blood Raging*, it's still a fine example of early Current's sound art phase, which reached its peak with 1985's *In Moshulut Night*. This new edition comes in a redesigned digipak featuring the earliest of David Tibet's chalk paintings. Tibet was battling a life-threatening illness during the recording of *Current 93's* 1986 album, *Impenitent* (Distro 008 LP). At the time he believed it would be his last. As a result it's one of his most poignant sets, his obsessing over death and judgment is given a luminous, acoustic setting. This new vinyl edition looks and sounds gorgeous. [DK]

Following years of silence from *Ludus*, the post-punk duo led by artist Under Sterling and guitarist Jen Devine, come some noisy signs of activity. First last year's *Required*, then *The Damage* (UMC 0002/2328 CD), a compilation of *Ludus*' finest moments and a timely reminder of the art-punk axis within which they worked. Presenting songs collected from their three albums and various 12"s from 1979-83, the shifts shift this way and that, but settle down to angular guitar patterns. Sterling's lyrics are more often declaimed than sung — all the better to fully feel the subversive impact of their homegrown feminism. "Little Geni" might dress itself up as a prototype of Altered Images pop but, as its message — Wake up! Shake up! — is a call to power. [GU]

**Clayton & Jerry Grasnick's** *Sound Songs* (Winter & Winter JMT Edition 919006 CD) is the sort of thing that Clayton, who started out as a jazz singer, now come to specialise in. The duo's most evident appeal to her — her most recent return to jazz material was the marvellous *Beautiful Love* with pianist Fred Hersch. That 1996 album showed her to be a fine interpreter of a lyric, but she doesn't have a convincingly beautiful voice, and is first and foremost an improviser. These sound songs from 1985 don't feature too many grooves, and only two tracks have lyrics: "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat", Charles Mingus's lament for the death of Lester Young, but these words don't do justice to the beautiful melody, and a wonderful adaptation of Emily

Dickenson's poem "I'm Nobody". Jerry Grasnick is uncannily sympathetic, his masterly support on drum kit and "eaten" percussion overcoming any feeling of sparseness. Extraordinary. [AH]

During the 90s, **Herb Robertson** became overshadowed by Dave Douglas as the leading New York downtown trumpet player. If he only released a few CDs under his own name that decade, the 80s were a different story when he got to make a string of excellent albums for JMT. The 1985 set of Robertson compositions, *Transparency* (Winter & Winter JMT Edition 919002 CD), might be short on the incandescence that lit up, say *Recent Music* (Long Afternoon Spans) (LP), where his playing is explosive and barn-blasting, and soprano Jen Berni is unrecognisable compared to the resonant player he's become, offering some of the most lyrical, rhapsodic playing of his career. But the understood effect is partly down to the resounding, whose low sound levels lack strong presence. Bill Frisell, Lindsay Horner and Joey Baron — displaying remarkable control of wildly fluctuating tempos on the boppish "Recessus" — complete an excellent line-up. [AH]

The boss vox of the *Telekoh*, the George Morden of the vocoder, **Roger Trouton** was tragically killed on 25 April 1999 in an apparent murder-suicide by his brother Larry. Unfortunately, his legacy lies on only in the winter of chart hits containing vocoded vocals, used simply to mask the singer's prodigious lack of talent. *We Can Make You Dance*, *The Zapp* and *Roger Anthology* (Warner Bros./R&B 012278344 28CD), however, series to redress the balance with two discs of the baddest talkbox and handclaps ever recorded.

Trouton and his group Zapp test hit the public consciousness with the eternal "More Source To The Durcie", recorded under the auspices of George Clinton in 1980. As this excellent collection shows, though, the group had already recorded some very fine straightforward funk as *Regie & The Human Body*, but their records barely made it out of their hometown of Cincinnati. However, their Matador-styled, futuristic funk joints is what everyone remembers them for, and the classics like "My Alright", "Be Ruff, So Tall", "Dance Floor" and "Computer Love" that Dr Dre needed to clear the G-Funk blueprint are here in all their glory. If you want to get deeper into da mystifies of talkboxin', Trouton's solo album, *The Many Faces Of Roger* (Warner Bros./R&B 012278329 CD), containing his amazingly hyperbolic cover of "I Hold It Through The Creepin'", has been remixed. [PS] □ Reviewed by Louise Gray, Amy Hamilton, Dave Rabin, Biba Alpof, Peter Shapiro and Leo Watson

# Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

## THE APES

### THE FUGUE IN THE FOG

FRENCHKISS FKI034 CD

Maryland four-piece The Apes play organ-driven garage funk testimonials in the gospelized tradition of The Make-Up and The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. There are no guitars, just a fist baccano of organ and bass that thumps through a set of pounding up-tempo tunes. For their live shows the whole group repeatedly dress up in combat fatigues. The Fugue In The Fog feels like a lightning strike, a breakneck run through 14 barely distinguishable tracks, with titles like "Apes Salute" and "Apes Theme". Although it's not as gloriously stooped as it first looks, with a second spin revealing all kinds of tawdry new wave logic and Strangely baselines, the fact that these guys are as wacky butches fails to detract from the purity of their monomaniacal pursuit of the teenage party zone.

### THE CIRCUS OF THE SCARS

#### HOME IS WHERE THE HURT IS

BETA/LACTAM RING MTH01 CD

The Circus Of The Scars are a duo who are obviously obsessed with the surreal sound of contemporary Coil as well as such tend apocalyptic culture staples as The Process Church Of Final Judgement and Charles Manson. It's a shame that their subject matter should be so ruthlessly generic that it prevents you really sinking into the music, which more often than not is genuinely lovely. The opening "The Flogging Song" sounds like something from Coil's Solstice series, or an outtake from Beckwards, as a beautifully artless vocal phases in and out over some symphonic keyboards. The fact that their studio skills are nowhere near as advanced as Peter Christopherson's gives this a primitive art school edge that sounds a bit like Simon Witham-Sell and Richard Young's LAKE, this time mottled with tattoos and piercings. Yet despite effective use of schizoapocalyptic cut-ups and some spasticus instruments that recall The Legendary Pink Dots, as soon as the extended Manson samples kick in, it's just impossible to take this seriously.

### NEIL MICHAEL HAGERTY

#### PLAYS THAT GOOD OLD ROCK AND ROLL

DRAG CITY DRAG001 CD

Play That Good Old Rock And Roll is Hagerty's second solo disc since splitting with Royal Trux. Unlike his debut, which he recorded himself using wildly juxtaposed overdubs, he cut this with his touring group. Yet the tracks still feel inorganic, seeming to move through sequential chuncks rather than rocking in real time. In parts it sounds closest to Alex Chilton's *Like Flies On Shattered Glass* in the way it merges mangy roots music with a deliberately contrived sound logic. While Play That Good Old Rock And Roll isn't quite as mind-boggling as Chilean's magnum opus, there are certainly moments: "The Storm Song" serves up some Dixie-fied gospel that sees Hagerty almost turn to religion, while the opening "Gratitude" hearks back to classic Trux in the way that he simply takes a thoughtless

phrase (in this case "thanks a lot") and repeats it to plausibility. One of the best things to have come out of the Trux split has been Hagerty refusing on his lead guitar work and it's splattered all over this disc in gory detail, with "Louise La Ray" taking the brunt of his ecstasy. Edith Frost, fresh from her Drag City Supersession with Hagerty, blends some County vocals into the mix, but the way the occasional string arrangements just waltz across the tracks is incongruous as just a wistful curtness.

### KEIJU HAINO & TATSUYA YOSHIDA

#### UNTIL WATER GRASPS FLAME

NOISEASIA NMH01 CD

Rough drummer Tatsuya Yoshida has been teamed with Keiju Haino before, though the documentary evidence is unfortunately thin on the ground and barely hints at the form that both players are capable of. The closer that Musica Transonic went with Haino, Ibagon, was such an awkward halfway meeting of styles that none of the parties had much room to really manoeuvre. While Under Water Grasps Flame is a much more focused and aesthetically varied set, it still feels frustratingly short of the pan-genetic blowout it might have been. As well as guitar and voice, Haino plays various acoustic ethnic instruments and it's when the duo move into more profound, drowsing areas that the set really takes off. Although the guitar and drum duels are as heavy as you could have hoped, they're disappointingly linear. Yoshida seems slightly coaxed, too eager to follow Haino's every change of direction rather than simply just singing out on his own. Still, the more meditative material serves as a fine palliative, especially the closing track where Haino draws little gasps of sorrow up from the bottom of his lungs while Yoshida sounds a broken heartbeat.

### THE HOTOTOGISU

#### CUCKOO CLOUDLAND

DEUTSCH NORD NUMBER LP

Rumoured to be some kind of archival Japanese folk album heavily influenced by avant-thinkers like Tchekhov Kroup and The By Mahal Travellers, Cuckoo Cloudland sounds much more likely to be related to UK impressarios like SunnO))) and Vilebrequin Orchestra. That The Hototogisu's first release is a dark CD-R on SunnO)))'s Matthew Bower's Rural Electrification label would seem to confirm the Japanese tag as so much BS. The use of seesawing string dynamics, darkening metal and silver bells gives this a lovely freefloating feel that sounds like some kind of halfway meeting between Neil Campbell's medieval clank and Bower's primitive take on eternal music, while the use of a cheap Casetone gives it a punk edge. It comes wrapped in a silk-screened rice paper jacket in a limited edition of 100.

### JOSHUA

#### GOLD COSMOS

FEATHER ONE'S NEST FON034 CD

Joshua is a solitary musician based in Western Massachusetts who has been quietly amassing a

distinctive back catalogue that explores the furthest reaches of dimensionally transcendent folk music. Where his last two releases were lo-fi and soul-baring in the extreme, Gold Cosmos is a more subtly arranged and layered affair, with Joshua's whispery entreaties sunk deep in an echo delay that recalls the stolid, dislocated sound of Skip Spence's Out. Here his sound is further bolstered by contributions from members of Lower Recordings, Six Organs Of Admittance and Fred Frith. Despite Joshua's leanings towards British acoustic guitarists like Bert Jansch and Davy Graham, the extra layers of instrumentation means it ends up sounding more akin to the hazy mantras of prime Popol Vuh. The twilight atmosphere is further heightened by eerie sketches of sound that range from assorted wildlife to the garbled tongues of humans, making Gold Cosmos seem closer to some kind of intense sound journal rather than "merely" a collection of acoustic songs.

### K-SALVATORE

#### THE COUNTERFEITER

SWA SWA002 LP

K-Salvatore are another offshoot from the No-Nick Blues Band membership, a fearless improvisatory ensemble whose releases are always gorgeously put together, with visuals and text that serve to complement and illuminate the songs within. The Counterfeiter is a particularly striking example and comes in a six-screened folder sleeve adorned with a painting of a dying Christ and a booklet of automatic prose. "Man's Psychedelic Breakfast" starts off the first side with a breathy, ringingfield that sounds a stumbling gamut dance before the tape cuts to "The Dolphin", an extended section of clunking gong and percussion work that moves into territories previously conquered by Amos Diaz. The second side works with comparatively more conventional forms, opening with "Bohemian Liberated Bloomsbury" which features the kind of detailed acoustic jamming that the UK's Shadow Ring elevated to a fine art. "Sell It" is much more dramatic, with words sounds like a squeezing square laying liquid lines of speech over driving bass and shifting electronics, coming across as some kind of plugged in medieval heist.

### SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE

#### DARK NOONITE

HOLY MOUNTAIN 1240 CD

Six Organs Of Admittance – the five series plus the solo, according to Buddhist scripture – is one Ben Chasny a West Coast American whose droning, acoustic psychedelia feels like some kind of missing link between early happy jazzy like lysergicous Ravi or the Third Ear Band and the steel string splendor of guitarists Leo Kottke and Robbie Basho. Chasny was previously a member of Plague Lounges whose *Wicker Image* album, released in 1996, was a fine approximation of the sort of thick air generated by Japan's Fushishibashi, but Six Organs Of Admittance work on a more intimate level. The opening "Spirits Abandoned" is glorious, a

dramatic slow march led by buzzing, fingerpicked guitar and Chasny's ominously deep vocal. Although the later instrumental stuff feels lighter and more communal, at points giving the nod to "Tokyo's Ghost" or the fatter side of *Faust*, the album's overall atmosphere is lost and elegiac, a bleak postcard from the other side of nowhere.

### SUNBURNED HAND OF THE MAN

#### JAYBIRD

MANHARD NO NUMBER CD R

Sunburned Hand Of The Man are an ever-evolving gang of multi instrumentalists well versed in the many manifestations of contemporary American sound. Their roots lie way back in 1994 when as the trio they took on the name of the Sti-Spangled Banner and released an LP as part of Thrillton Moors and Bryan Coley's limited *Ass Run* series they have connections to The No-Nick Blues Band, with whom they toured throughout the States and a couple of members turned up on NIN's *Live At Ken's Electric Light* and played in the NINCK offshoot Egypt Is The Magic #. Since then Sunburned's ranks have swollen to accommodate 15 players and their free, openended sound reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of their membership. Unlike their comrades in the NINCK, Sunburned's sound is more straightforwardly rhythmic with seeds of dub and bass patterns that lollipop George Clinton while flutes, phased electronics and tremulous voices kiss the sky. Still, the kind of feel is of some kind of temporally misaligned folk orchestra taking great avian strides through the music of the mountains, and their long-standing relationship with gorgan folk toveller Michael Headley should give you some idea of the kind of beatistik glory that radiates throughout.

### SUNN)))

#### FLIGHT OF THE BEHEMOTH

SOUTHERN LORD SUNN01 CD

Sunn))) are a demoniac guitar/bass duo who defend their inimitable sound with a fierce dedication to minimalism. It is, in part, a tribute to Olympia Dylan Carlson's Earth project who, alongside Melvins, first joined the dots between Black Sabbath's metallic sludge rock and the slowly soaring songs of heraldic doom ministrions. If anything, Sunn))) take this eschatological even further with slow motion waves of eternally peaking crunch that rarely coalesce into anything that could even pass for a riff. The opening tracks on Flight Of The Behemoth thrash with all the heavy gravity of a black hole as ultra-low tones with the potential to reconfigure your internal organs hang ominously in space. Also included here are two Melvins remakes, while Sunn)))'s Akita adding some distorted piano and technician electronics that combine to create a sonorously gassy hug. The closing "FWTB" sees slightly accelerate on a riff that sounds like a ratty "Iron Man", and with a subtle like "I dream of Lars Ulrich" being thrown through the bus window instead of my master My Little Koffi Burton" it presents a scenario that we can all relate to. □

# Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

## AARDVARCK FIND THE COW DELISH 1405R/CD

For fans of the prettier middle ground between Detroit techno and dry, snare-pocked HipHop, Mac Kiwi's debut album is the next best thing to a new Urban Yobe record. The Delish label occupies a kind of DMZ between Detroit's IDM and Arthur's broken beat, and Aardvark's album exemplifies this genre straddling in its rounded, analogue pads and bleep-speaker rattle. *Find The Cow* fuses the stately chords of Blade Runner to sputtering bass/ snare patterns, syncretized to the point of dissolution. Only grinding tracks like "Steps" recall Rept's debut album, but are updated with nether production and vastly clearer sound. All of the 23 cuts on the CD play out like variations on a single theme — a sketchbook full of charcoal of ominously overcast horizons.

## AKUFEN QUEBEC NIGHTCLUB PERLON PERL04 3X12"

Marc Leclair's Perlon doublepack picks up where his work for labels like Background, Trapet and Team! left off, with some Moombahton rhythms that explode into a peacock rainbow. What makes Akufen's style distinctive are his sources: most of the samples come not from synthesizers or traditional samples, but from snippets of radio-dj'd blu: woven into a kind of pop-cultural glossolalia. On top of Leclair's trademark lurching percussions and rubber-sprung basslines, pipsqueak R&B flashes interlock with bassy announcements, grunts, orchestral stabs and the spinning static of intestinal frequencies. In a step sideways, Leclair even finds an unexpected affinity with the minimalist Garage of labels like Shelf Life and Temps on "Brown Hawa", with a rhythm poised precariously between static four-to-the-floor and kind two-step swing.

## EL-B BUCK AND BURY/BACK TO ME GHOST GHOSTA 12"

On "Back And Bury", MC Juiceman keeps it sparse, and heavy, while El-B unleashes one of his darkest rhythms yet. While El-B unleashes the ghost in question is the spectre of Techstep, which

haunts the track in the restless snare, denison bass and the red-eyed relentlessness of it all. True to form for the label, wishtlike keyboard flourishes flash across upper regions of the track, offsetting the massive low end with an almost glassy fragility. "Back To Me" is nowhere near as ominous, as Antontone sings, yet another tale of a lover whose partner has slept with her best friend. Again, as on Shelf Life's aforementioned releases, weird, plinky piano figures counterpose the magma bass, a curious merger of R&B cheese and darkside menace.

## HOLGER FLINSCH COLLAPSING NEW PEOPLE PUNKT MUSIC PUNKT009 CD/CDLP

Flinsch's second album appears on the Raum. Musik-affiliated Punkt imprint, and while the record is closely related to Raum's dubby, minimal Techno, it benefits from Flinsch's willingness to move away from the limited stylistic parameters of the form. The tracks here that how closest to the lampante are dark, surely affairs shot through with crisp 4/4 rhythms — far for the course, but well executed aesthetically. Elsewhere, though, Flinsch dabbles in rhythms caked in sanc and loops delicate harmonies until they blossom into sparkling auras. Moving even further out, Flinsch experiments with a range of textures: the grainy analog tones of vintage new wave, moody string passages and a host of vocal samples, looped until the words lose meaning. On his furthest excursion from dub Techno, he cobbles together flutes horns and carnival drums via a lumbering conga line that tails somewhere between Thomas Bernknopf's Soul Center project and the ecstatic House of the Africanism series.

## DJ LOGIC THE ANOMALY ROCKADEPT RT0004 CD

On his debut album, 1999's DJ Logic Presents Project Logic, the New York turntablist established himself as the House Of the downtown set. On his latest album, however, Logic has largely abandoned the arty formalism for a more streamlined, crowdpleasing jam-band groove. While much of this sounds like Madak, Martin & Wood playing with St Germain, the

tracks where he abandons the stale funk ("Frequency One", "Miles Away", "Afrobeat") really do augur a bright, new future for turntable jazz. (Peter Shapiro)

## NEW FLESH STICK N MOVE BIG DATA BD005 12"

True to their Caribbean roots, New Flesh's take on HipHop has as much to do with reggae's lunging rhythms as it does classic New York boom-boom. "Stick N Move", fronted by the saucous chouring of Juicy Aileen, Toaste Taylor and Blackdate, sprays a sloppy Nordic baseline all over a clean, spacious break that heavy on the sanc. Rhythmically, the track's essentially a slowed down version of the hyperbolic Flavour of Garage currently advanced by outfitts like South London's Horsepower Producers — suggesting that a few collisions down the line could spark provocative mutations with two already volatile genres. "Underneath" is less pressurised, both rhythmically and vocally, but the jerky keyboards and drum machines make for an intriguing hybrid of electro and R&B.

## REPLICANT RUMBA ROCKERS A RATHER INTERESTING MIX NONPLATE NONPLATE CD

Punting off with "El Den Mambo", a sween little slice of cosmic tropicalism from Seler Coconut, Burnt Friedman has edited together a mutant street party in celebration of Atom Heart/Uwe Schmidt's re-imaginings of technologically advanced music for the socially minded. Working over the past decade under a self-efacing succession of aliases, Santiago based Schmidt has created an rebarbed and handsonly ticked out Techno hybrid that revels in its own artifice. Authority? Not even an issue here: it's too busy running around drunk with a lampshade on its head. Friedman's edits and overdrives add a spryng sense of purpose to the whole affair, especially on the waddling vocoder excesses of "Roxanely" and the faltering samba rhythms holding "All Notes Off" together. Other collaborations include Tetsu Inoue letting his hair down during the stinky "Stereo Kiss" and Lisa Carbon, featured on the floating and quirky "Congo" at the close of the set. (Ren Hollings)

## VARIOUS SOME OTHER MISTAKES SOINDOLIVE S005 12"

Matthew Herbert continues to develop his Soundlike label as a platform for artists who share his own eccentric and unconventional vision. My Robot Friend's "Way Down" employs growling analogue synthesizers, a throbong, overdriven bassline, and affectless blues vocals to suggest early 80s funk-punk. It's strikingly different from most releases on Soundlike, but given post-punk's political orientation, the reinvocation of the genre — part of a general re-examination, along with releases like Soul Jazz's *In The Beginning There Was Rhythm* — makes sense within the context of Herbert's own increasingly politicized work. The 8-Bit Construction Set uses an obsolete Atari computer to create wobbly, unstable effects, thankfully free of irony. Si Beig's "Semi-Detached Utopia" draws together a Chicago House drum track and an amply No Wave bassline, with jump cuts and Mack loops galore, and a welter of unexpected tones and triques. Herbert's own contribution — featuring his customary shuffle rhythms and an eerie chorus of hollow, shuddering tones, like a recording of excited doves played back at half-speed — is less heating, but no less exhilarating.

## ANDY VAZ CLICKS\_SOUNDS\_VARIATIONS 2 [-] SOUNDS VARIATION 2 2 CD

Backgrounds Record's Andy Vaz continues his conceptual label [-] with two long tracks based largely on squelches and blips. While the conceptual underpinning's a bit vague — as with each [-] release, it's based on "the use of the same sounds, re-used throughout the entire EP", begging the question of when this isn't the case in computer music — it's a pleasant departure from most clicks and cuts 4/4 tracks: while the steady pulse is still in full force, Vaz has made use of triplets and accented, tumbdown patterns, throwing everything just off kilter. Soundwise, he fleshes out the click-palette with a cold, dimension-robust range of squawks and bleeps, like a sedated update of Dan Bell's classic Acid as DBX.



# Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## MARTIN CAMPBELL & HI-TECH ROOTS DYNAMICS

ROOTSMAN

CHANNEL ONE T88010 CD

With the lack of distinctive voices in reggae these days, it's unusual to report that here is a new album where a UK singer is the strongest factor rather than the playing or the versions. If Martin Campbell had recorded in the 70s over a series of rhythms from the Upsetter or Augustus Pablo, his status would now be legendary. Essentially this is a surfaces' album with the conscious lyrics largely covering struggles in the ghettos of West Kingston: "Just Another Day" comes with such a plaintive and wistful delivery that it's difficult not to be drawn in. Three dub appear amongst the 16 tracks, but most of the rhythms here are to be found on the Hi-Tech Roots Dynamics albums 90 Degrees Dub, New York Dub and Roots Dub.

## CARLTON & THE SHOES LOVE ME FOREVER

STUDIO ONE S00303 CD

Clement Dodd's Studio One misuse strategy may be hampered and bare boned, but there's no denying that his productions have become encrusted classics of Jamaican music. As is often the case, there are no extra or extended tracks here. No matter, this is one of the guaranteed stone classic vocal albums, underpinned by enthralling rhythms that have been recycled countless times in acts of loving tribute and cynical plagiarism. While the Soul Jazz and Heartbeat labels have done great recycling jobs on the label with their reissues and compilations, here's the real thing on its original home label.

## JUNIOR DELAHAYE REGGAE

WACKIES W1202 LP

What once seemed ponderous, simplistic and outmoded returns as elemental, minimal and right on the button. Lloyd "Bulldozer" Biscoe based Wackies label has been improbably adopted by Berlin's Rhythm & Sound for some vital releases. This is a 1982 "showcase" album with three extended tracks per side. Bulldozer's JA credentials kept his New York sound in sync with Kingston, courtesy of visiting musicians such as Leyo Sibbles, Jerry Gentle and Roland Alphonse. Whether signature horns grace the otherwise workmanlike "All I Need Is You", The sound is closest, though, to the Black Ark from five years earlier, most evident on "Love" and "Revelving Man", the former's skeletal structure and delivery is nearer to today's Berlin than anything coming out of Jamaica. And why the wistful voiced Delahaye is not feted as one of reggae's great singers remains a mystery.

## DIGITAL DURBZILLA

FUNCTION CHANNEL002 CD

Back in pre-drum 'n' bass days, dub 80s spin tunes at bopsm where drum tracks turned into skittering blips and there was enough top on the mix to open cans. Then the disease of "intelligent"

drum 'n' bass was born, and any potential for the development of the short-lived reggae/dub angle became as sidelined as the parent genres. With the notable exception of No U-Turn and its darker spinoffs, it's only over the past year or so that the tough tunes are back, merging down 'n' bass, electro and club sciences, and there's no one as tough and fierce as Digital. Durbzilla follows last year's "Warped" 12" and continues the drive to induce deep vein reactions with its awesomely physical basslines and ultrapeaced, torrid percussive breaks. Although titles like "Champion Barber", "Smoker Dub" and "Leave Now" have vocal samples that betray their origin, the rhythm tracks are generations on. The usual path for drum 'n' bass/breaks producers seems to be burn out, move into soundtracks or introduce vocalists coinciding with a major deal. Hopefully, we can take the trajectory of Digital into more creative dimensions.

## DUB FUNK ASSOCIATION BLACK CITY DREAD

TANTY TANTY07 LP

Dub Funk Association is actually Kelvin Richards, who, on this release, puts together new tracks from Sounds Of The Heavyweight and Roots Of Dub Funk and utilises an album title from a deleted set. The result is his strongest offering to date. Apparently the inspiration came from a long lost dub album of mid-70s vintage (Contempo Jade by Black Jade – does it exist?) found by Richards lying around the front-of-curtain dorms one Bank Holiday in Notting Hill; an album which from its description sounds like a template for much of today's nu dub. DFA have promised much in the past and this intelligently composed set should form the template for the future.

## FREEDOM MASSES FREEDOMINUM

COMBODRUMS PRAM01 CD

## FREEDOM MASSES VERSION OF PEACE

COMBODRUMS PRAM02 CD

From the deepest valleys of South Lancashire, just east of Manchester, come Freedom Masses, aka Original Dub Adventurer, essentially Professor P and John-X. Their "I Am What I Am" single, lifted from the poorly distributed set Life A Ruff, was one of the strongest UK roots singles of the last few years. Meticulously constructed, these two albums are not companion vocal and dub sets but two separate products released with the space of three months. Nevertheless, the two pieces continue the pace with a mix of well-worked modern roots and sleepers tunes, but more interestingly seem really speeded-out, chaotic clubs such as "Offbeat Dub" and "Satan Slaughter". Sene James' lead off the albums onto 7"s or 12"s would probably have more impact in what is becoming something of a competitive market these days.

## IRATION STEPPAS JUNGLE JUNGLE/JUNGLE DUB

TANDOOM BPI027 T88027 12"

Based out of their High Risk studio, Dennis Rootball and Mark Inson have started up their

own Leeds based imprint with three 7" singles. "Jungle Jungle" features vocals from UK roots stalwart Tena Stein, but it's the version that's the business, going beyond the routine consciousness in an edgy-steppers style with EPA posing out of the mix. Tena Stein also fronts "Warlike Babylon" (T88027), another record with a stronger flip where the rhythm is boosted by Bumming Jackin and Spear on organs. The third single, "Dive Drop" (T88028), from Leicester's Vironics, is more technical in its percussives with a minimalist, descending bass pattern laying the box for a battery of keyboard generated blips and blips – Iration Steppas' remix on the version cracks up the pace and fills the space with even more sonic drivers. Do not enter elevators playing this kind of music.

## BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS EXODUS (DELUXE EDITION)

WINGD G0024 314658406 CD

Exodus follows Catch A Fire in Island's scandalously overdue rechristening of Joni's back catalogue. This album presented the international breakthrough for reggae's only global superstar and his remoulded Wailers. While Catch A Fire was accompanied by a mono version, this set comes with a CD full of rare and unreleased cuts including five from the recording gig at London's Rainbow Theatre in June 1977. Four tracks are sourced from a late Marley collaboration: two wists to the "Plinky Reggae Party" and lovely vocal and dub versions of Cumbi Mayfield's "Keep On Moving", both of which are infused in comparison with the wild mixes which originally appeared on an Upsetter 12" and was reissued in Part Three of the JAD label retrospective last year. The versions of "Waiting In Vain", "Exodus" and "Jamming" will satisfy Marley fans and reggae bulls alike. Let's hope this sees continuers in style.

## THE OBSERVER HEADSHOT

HEARTBEAT H0249 CD

The subtitle, "Reggae Instrumentals, Dubs And Other Oddities", underpins this magnificent collection by way of way. The production work of Winston "Niney" Haffey, aka the Observer, after the label he launched in 1970, has been collected in the past most notably on the Heartbeat, Haffey and, later, Boyd & Fire imprints, but these sets have largely concentrated on vocalist and DJs. Here the overriding emphasis is on the rhythm, with Errol Thompson at the controls. There's a full stock of dub to Debris Brown tunes with the most creative being "Came Dub" – a version of "Here I Come Again" where the drum track is run through tape echo and doubled in tempo – and the rarest being "Bottleshed In Fine Style", dubbing the singer's "Lie After You". Niney had caught Irie Mitchell & Irie HI Rhythm Section on their tour of the Caribbean when they surprised Al Green, and the guitar work of Terence Hedges left such an impression that many of the trademark lines used on Reverend A.I.'s hits were transplanted onto Observer rhythms. Groups at work here included horn

greats Bobby Ellis on "Here I Come" and Tommy McCook on "One Fine Load Of Coal", the charging dub to "Westbound Train". The "oddity" on the set is probably a dub of "Wolf And Leopards", here titled "Nasey Joe Version" (a likely reference to anal producer Joe Gibbs), where Bongo Herman utters a shit with Faye Beauford in the style of blackface master Kenneth Miller from the 1920s. This is straight from Heartbeat's top drawer and there can be no greater recommendation. But we can't have a review with no gags at all, so why no "Zinc Fence", the majestic dub to Cornell Campbell's "I Heart Is Clean"?

## THE SKATALITES/KING TUBBY THE LEGENDARY SKATALITES IN DUB

MOTION FASTRACK CD

This album was reviewed in the column in The Wire 211 in its vinyl-only form as Herb Dub – Cole Dub. The conclusion then was "essential"; now, with the addition of seven contemporary tracks on the CD-only release, I suppose the verdict points to compulsory. In 1975 Lloyd Brim, stand up bass player of the original Skatalites, recruited the remaining core members of that legendary outfit for these sessions, which can certainly stand alongside the finest of King Tubby's work. The extra tracks are picked up from some previous 10" releases on Motion and include "Candidge Dub", an alternate, hybridly version to the earlier "Whispering Dub", and "Sealing Dub", an intense percussion workout on the also present "Fugitive Dub". Special mention must be made of the exceptional playing from the great Ernest Ranglin on guitar, though the whole ensemble is hot, fluid and totally jazzy-up. Tubby must have love doing this one.

## VARIOUS

## SIMPLY ROCKERS VOL II

THIRIAN R0052 CD

Just how many reggae compilations can one label produce? Well, when it comes to those masses of repackaging at Trojan, the answer is, of course, infinite. An even more pressing question for the industry, though, might be just how many of these damn things can one person own? Or, how many times will people keep paying for an album with Niney The Observer's "Blood Fire" or Deonard Dekker's "D07 (Shanty Town)" on it? The second volume of the Simply Rockers series may be subtitled "Jamaican Music From The Vaults", but little of this admittedly enjoyable compilation is exactly new or previously unheard. Of the tracks that haven't already been compiled to death, one deserves special attention: King Stitt & The Gymnastics' 1969 masterpiece "Van Cleef". Along with Count Machouki and Red Hopperon, King Stitt was one of the original Jamaican DJs, and the record begins with him screaming, "These are the days of wrath, Eastwood! I am The Oggy One... I am Van Cleef, die, die, die." It then turns into something very akin to a jumping, skittering Nigerian highlife record of the same era. Worth the price of admission alone. (Peter Shapiro) □

# Electronica

Reviewed by Jerome Maunsell

## AGF/KYBORG

### CONSTANT VARIABLE I NEUE BERLINER INITIATIVE 004.12"

Documenting several live electronic events last year at the Neue Berliner Initiative club night, this is the first release in the "Constant Variable" series of EPs, which will pair off different individual artists with Kyborg. On these nine instrumental tracks, where Kyborg spans with Laub's Anger/Green-Facts, the sonic aesthetics is ultra-minimal and austere, clipped and agitated. Encrusted decays weave over the occasional bassline or analogic bleep, and rhythmic twitch along neurotically. AGF provides a few brief flirtations with wayward melody on "Domina" and "Dip Sub", the resulting sound elsewhere, paired to the bone with scalped-sharp geometry, might be too clinical for some. Lovers of icy, parched funk, though, should find the next few installments in the series worth waiting for.

## BABY FORD & THE IFACH COLLECTIVE

### SACRED MACHINE KLANG ELEKTRONIK 00 CD

Peter Fox has come a long way since the Acoustic days of "Oooh Koschy" and "Chikli Chikli Ahn Ah". After the Boro9 album, which was a startlingly amnesic, and largely unsuccessful, attempt to redefine techno across a broad canvas of styles, he went deep underground, only occasionally coming up full view. On "Sacred Machine", he's still hanging with the same crowd from the UK tech scene – Eon, Mark Brom, Thomas Melcher – but the sound now takes the Zen-like, mesmeric focus of his Iacob 12's & 4s logical conclusion, stirring in some of the cheeky flavor of his Minimal Man releases. Did School drum machine programming over bass wiggles creates a dry, sparse neo-futurist funk. "Ice Party" rocks idiosyncratically with a slightly off-key, chaotemic piano loop. "Bad Day" is uniquely moody, rain-soaked and windswept house music.

## THE BLACK DOG & BLACK SIFICHI

### UNSAVOURY PRODUCTS HYDROGEN DUREBOX DURE001 CD

"What do people want is listen to?" asks performance artist and poet Black Sifichi at the opening of this collaboration with The Black Dog's Ken Wayne. "Isn't communication becoming too much? Isn't communication becoming nothing?... What is going on with our reality?" Other provocative questions are spit out throughout this intriguing mix of Sifichi's drawled spoken word and Wayne's exotic electronics (which recalls, and even replicates, some moments of 1990's Spacemen). Apparently, Unsavoury Products is a tribute to William Burroughs, and was inspired by a collaboration with him in the months before his death. That album (which, as we are promised, will eventually see the light of day) sounds fascinating. While these 20 short, concise tracks all suffer from a lack of rhythmic interplay between the voice and electronics, and run slightly out of steam over the course of the CD, there are some great moments here. "Dear Ron" lopes along like an

outtake from a Jim Jarmusch movie. "Mental Health Hellfire" makes Dr Octagon sound like a frivolous clown.

## CAPITOL K ISLAND ROW

XL 10.147 CD

Kieran Craig Roberson's 1999 debut album as Capitol K, *Sounds Of The Empire*, on Mike Ross's Planet Mu label, had some blistering moments of Sonic Youth-style guitar noise amidst the more polite, strummed songs and electronic whimsy. This record of his second LP, also confusingly titled Island Row, is his first release for XL, and is, as the press release tells us, "to all intents and purposes, a brand new album". It's an endlessly melodic stuff, meshing up instrumentation and genres with a seeming open-mindedness – sometimes sounding like a pop collaboration between the sunniness, even guitar-laden moments of Mouse De Masi and a thousand indie groups of yesterday. Less jangle and more cut-up electronic and acoustic while songs would have been man satisfying to these ears, but the obvious restraint and songcraft on show here is likely to appeal to a much wider audience.

## CASCONE/CHARTIER/ DEUPREE

AFTER

12K 1021017 CD

## FRANKE BRETSCHNEIDER & TAYLOR DEUPREE

BALANCE

MILLE PLEURALEX MP109 CD

## SND

MILLE PLEURALEX MP109 CD

A 21 minute improvised live laptop performance recorded at Montreal's Musique festival last year forms the basis of After, which also offers three new works from each of the duo's parts, each composed long after the event, built out only of source material gathered at the gig. The whole disc is characterized by immensely focused microsecond which shift subtly, almost imperceptibly, around. Chartier's reconstructed "Kneerage" is so subtle as to be virtually inaudible. Deupree, meanwhile, uses repetition to create a novel kind of laptop minimalism.

Despite its collaboration with Frank Bretschneider, meanwhile, is more conventional and almost unbearably priggy club of hyper-clean techno – all pure, sharp rhythmic and melodic lines which gradually gather a kind of glacial momentum over each individual track as various added elements coalesce around the central loop. All these neatly sculpted cycles segue into each other, building agave before another.

The 15 tracks on the latest release from Sherfield's SND are equally economical in style, fusing cut-up digital ambience with super-spark rhythmic nuts and bolts, but they acknowledge the old blueprints of the dominant dancefloor styles. At points, it looks like an arch deconstruction of the motifs of Garage and disco

– or House with most of the superstructure removed – before descending into some CD-skipping drones and clicks.

## CURSORMINER

### THISMANSADVENTURE EP

UNCHARTED AUDIO UNCH001 12"

There's a schizophenic mélange of styles on these six tracks from London based musician Robert Tubb. The title cut serves up impeccably bombastic, jazzy breakbeats straight from the Aphex/Superpitcher school of hyperactive beats, cut up with a host of samples cut from TV and who knows where else. "To refuse the adventure is to run the risk of dying up like a pea in a shell," intones a very British voice, as Tubb stays true to his word with a slew of warped FX and bits and pieces playfully welded together in an anything-goes manner reminiscent of Spacemen releases. "Virus" is twisted, harmonious stomping pop, mothing 80s synth lines over industrial snarls and shouty new wave vocals with modic suss and midriff energy. "PopMusic" does the click track at high speed before settling into an insanely distorted groove that will have you checking your needs for fluid.

## GLOBAL GOON

### VATICAN NITEZ

NEPHLEX CAR10 12"

Global Goon's first releases had many misfitting liner notes for yet another one of Richard James's cast of pseudonyms. Judging from his latest collection of tunes, it's not hard to see why. Many of these tracks shirk more than a little with early vintage Aphex Twerk. "Business Man" could have come straight off Selected Ambient Works Vol 2, with its thickening synth motifs and cutsey analogic warbles. "Druggo" is a soaring swirl of warm, melodic tones over some straightforward, shuddering beats. What the Goon adds to the mix is a predilection for almost Prog interests – drowsingly similar to Steve Hillage. This may no longer break much new ground, but it's a heap of fun all the same, and remains refreshingly unpredictable.

## MASH'TA

### 705 ZEN MANIFESTO

QUATERMASSE QS102 CD

No shortage of quirky samples on this odd slice of esoterica, adored on the cover by a kooky, kenar-like woman. Some of them are epic, string-filled chunks of pseudo-soundtrack music; others recall the atmosphere of old black and white French films. But there's been some fairly intense stretching and twisting going on at some stage: many of these tracks warp in and out of time capsules, mangled in the Auk like a chewed up cassette tape, giving you the queasy sensa of classic MBV. Extravagant into braising, clattering beats and steeps characterise other tracks, punctuated with a raft of knock some euros. The album as a whole charges tack so many times, so abruptly, that it seems to suffer from something of an identity crisis.

## ROSY PARLAME

### GETXO

SIGMA 610 CD

Four years after launching the Sigma label with #1-4, London based (and apparently male) New Zealander Rosy Parlame's latest album, written and recorded between April and October 2001, showcases a more intricate, less lo-fi sound. That said, the all-encompassing wave of distortion which slowly envelopes the stirring Ambient repetitions of the first, awesome ten minute track "Venus" hardly seems like halving digital fidelity. Elsewhere, slowly evolving, calm phases develop over oceans of distorted clicks before morphing into something else entirely. The mood in general is somber, shimmering, subtle, and structured in a way that seems to have an organic, rather than artificial, logic. The closing track, "Lurka", another ten minute-plus opus, gets your sinew crawling, with a fleet of underivable electronic sivers and slabs of needling and abrasive sound, before sliding into an ambience that hovers, then swells beautifully.

## ALEXANDER RISHAUG

### PANORAMA

SMALLTOWN SUPERSONG SS1004 CD

Alexander Rishaug hails from Tromsøn, Norway, where he is a painter, ethnographer, curator, composer and part of the electronic Improv the Ann. The release from the ever-expanding Smalltown Supersound label is his debut solo album, and finds him jettisoning the ranks of the laptop, begird with an idiosyncratic clutch of clicks, skipping rhythms, unpredictable structures, weirdly melodic interludes and scrambled hard drive sequences. Much of this ground may be familiar, but there's a careful alternation between chaos and predictability, fuzzy clicks, mucky overdriven, yet expertly hued shifting clicks, and Oval-like meathy ambience that makes this release gel.

## ULTRA-RED/ANNA PLANETA

### SPLIT 12"

FAT CAT FCAT01843 12"

Dissent hits the dancefloor in the two House tracks from California audio activists Ultra-red, which mix beats with site recordings made during steep protests against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington DC on 16-17 April 2000. Whirling helicopter blades and the chopped-up charts of demonstrators are woven around a minimal, hypnotic groove on "A16", while the sounds and vocals of "A17" (in megaphone pronunciations, crowd noise, and conversations over a melodic chime) it's a worthy attempt to bring political engagement and protest to the often sappy aesthetic, hedonistic arena of House. On the flip, Anna Planeta contributes another two artfully arranged field recordings, but these are more suited for home listening. "Good Morning, Gitter Box" was put together from sounds "made and heard at a huge, long-abandoned Catholic school house near Alton Towers theme park". The results are eerie indeed: all rattling cymbals, spacy drones, and sitar-like noises – an audio venti with some snapshot which is hauntingly effective. □

# HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

## ABSTRACT RUDE AND FRIENDS

HEAVYWEIGHTS ROUND IV/FAMILY AFFAIR  
RAISEMENT B7011 12"

About a decade and down of dead dreams after the original meetings of Los Angeles's Project Blowed brigade, the pure black wherewind returns with a new installment of the very so often "Heavyweight" poseur jambonies. J-Snow inauguates the madness ("We missin' a game" and got freestyle in our DNA) and introduces lead-off leadman Apcoplyne to "wedge the Enlightenment out of the darkness." Zulu's triple-hop shadowbox the hi-hats and descends into a nearly unlistenable Grecospeak that wins this round's reward averted. And damn if Timbaland didn't steal his boppified typerwriter crank from the way local legends CTC (Elay Khu, Ngafish, Ridover?) rep. The first time around, they were all just kids in a burning Los Angeles, now, their seeds press and wiggle on the album sleeve, oblivious to nutt, sessions, Horace Tapscott and the songs of the unusual and unaged. Anthonormal Volume 10 masters, "We identify/Cause we stanin' artists/Still behin' in the same Civic I blew up in but I still got wind" before letting out a chestful of wheezes, headaches and woes.

## AL-SHID IGN'ANT/IGHT CLUB

OLD MAD ENTERTAINMENT OM0501 12"

When Biggy debuted in 1994 with "Juicy," the partly young and partly old explained it was "Time to get paid/Show up like the World Trade." Though BIGG's no longer with us, the spirit of comparing the robustness of one's skills with nation-wide tragedy lives on with seedy Old Mad upstart Al-Shid, who crudely links himself the "notless thing to hit the streets of New York since sweating Seven." Over J-Zene's playful production, Shid introduces himself as a scared-sheepish neighbor of lighter hue: "Good Morning, America, this is your future! An ignorant black mulatto's out to juice ju/ju/your economy?" Nah, rather stuck it up, "Get on welfare, go triple-platinum and die it up." Ignorance can be funny when it's clever, and Shid's clearly smarter than your average Eminem-like New Nihilist. "If you're not a chimppeee then stop stretching my patience," he swats before closing the song by rattling off a dozen dirty words. "Fight Club" isn't exactly Shid's moral redeemer, particularly when Huggy Bear appears to help harmonize about abortion clinics, Nazis and all things sacred.

## DMX

WHO WE BE  
DEF JAM 3145927921 12"

Folks decry the dummy raps which eat time sideways, but every now and then something profound falls from an unexpected mouth, and things go good for a few minutes at a time. As attention spans sputter and album manifested go untouched, DMX banks back with a dumbfounding simple indictment of the powers that be. "Who We Be" has neither build, nie,

progress or change; it's the rap approximation of one great riff repaved like ellipsis, DMX's clunking verses angle civilization's despair into sharp, punchy little barks from the bottom of the well ("What they don't know is/The bushits/The dumb/live give/The amoung/The city/The farmer"). It's an immovable single punctuated by a chorus of detained youngsters believing "They don't know who we be," and though X paciently chooses to name neither the "they" or "they," it only serves to make things that much clearer.

## GRANDMASTER FLASH THE OFFICIAL ADVENTURES OF GRANDMASTER FLASH

STRUT 011 12"

This is the first album devoted to the turntable exploits of the man who just about every musician currently paying their trade who isn't a robot bove owes their living to. "The disco dream of the mean machine, the Darth Vader of the side fader." Admittedly, it's a very strange, sometimes ill-fitting conglomeration — Flash reworking his old routines with little snippets of 1979 and 1982 appearances at the T-Connection and Disco Convention and full length Did School classics like Babe Ruth's "The Mexican" — but everyone should have it in their collection if only to give Flash some dap. If you give it some time and a set of concentration, though, it does offer some insights into what those old block parties might have been like: "Flesh Ties the Roof Off" finds Flash delaying the climax for even longer than even DJ Furturkson did on the Parliament albums, teasing us with the intro of "Give Up The Funk (The Ref. To The Sucker)" before unleashing a prolonged wave of "Apache" congaes and decorated disco synths which lasts roughly eight minutes until Flash finally delivers the goods and lets P-Hank grove, "Flesh Has More Bounce," on the other hand, maintains its momentum throughout its 12 minute duration and must have been the kind of thing at the peak of an evening's proceedings. Good as this is, let's just hope that the tiny snippets from the T-Connection and Disco Convention are just teasers for full releases, and that no one's holding on to the tapes to maintain the value of their collection. (Peter Shapiro)

## KIN GISENG GERMANIK ROBOTZ

POD POD PRODUCES NO NUMBER MC

There's a lot of music on this tape, but that is almost beside the point. Tucked at the end of Side A and the opening of Side B are fragments of an interview the Kid did with electro pioneer Arthur Baker late last century. "I hope I don't sound like some nerd, stuck in the past," the laddish Giseneng apologizes, sipping the drolol from his cup: mention of unreleased Baker-Bambataa dubs. The POD Kid, who funds his hobby by living for The Tom Tom Club, is a true child of the Atomic Age, born amidst half of these songs back in 1982. His lethal tape includes all the standbys (Man Parish, Joncum Crew, Mammon, Egyptian Lover), and though he runs roughshod over some crucial mases,

Giseneng definitely gets wildstyle points for his transmogrification of Shanno's "Give Me Tonight" and some noto fantasy like the aptly named "Play At Your Own Planet Rock". Madcap moment of the year: whistling the rug from under World Class Wedding Cru's "Juice" to reveal the ready, litig grace of Kefwerk's "Your Dr. France".

## KILLA KELA CROPCIRCLEZ/ACCAKELA JAZZ FUDGE JZ001 12"

Your beats is too short to box with Kela. The talented young fint with the faceted lips returns with his second solo single, getting momentarily gimmicky with the technically solid but generally uneventful drum 'n' bass of "Cococococ" before finding glory amongst lower fletishes on the bonus tracks. Clean and precise recordings are the beatboxer's energy, anyone who witnessed his back and forth play with Mi Thang on the baby Aristotle Mouthwash can attest to how much better Kela sounded dropped in the nose and explosive wash of a great cassette. There's a thin line between faring and beatboxing, and Kela just about crosses it on the superior Did Vadim remix, but this time Kela gets to solo and wonder rather than just peddly mouth the "Amen" break ad nauseam. Alongside space codet Vadim's patient digressions and dorking sequences, Kela mumbles and flutters an almost cinematic accompaniment.

## LIFESAVERS HEADEXERCISE/ CLUTCH MOMENTS

CLUMMIN 00311 12"

As if it wasn't strange enough that the light-kast Quantum collective decided to open ranks, their newest surferd from Portland, Oregon, land of technical tools and little more. No women, the Savas pair of Mr Atlas and Reverend Shines aside, it just means more time to chisel those battle rhymes and work on those start-stop drum checks. On the former court, Atlas considers "amputatin[ing] your hands so you can hold your applause," while his partner oddly adduces, "You couldn't hold your weight on a Jerry Craig mustache." Labelmate and Blackalicious producer Chef Xok shows the per the way of Quantumman on the B side, with "Movement 2" unfurling a gloriously post-1973 baseline and slapping on a hirsute brassy to cement the Did School park jam fest.

## MOB DEEP BURN

LOUD 04497 12"

Jay-Z gets the unfortunate feeling that Jay-Z did indeed set Mob Deep's career back a few years when he indicated, "You little fuck, I got money stackin' bigger than you." The pint-sized Mobb duo of Prodigy and Havoc returned with the otherwise somg and bittersweet Infamy, from which this excellent single is rescued. Havoc's guitar snakes and snorts in search of its own tail, and with fellow shorty Vito on the hook, this is probably the prettiest and most sublime shoot 'em up buck buck joint of the year. Mobb buddy

Big Noyd even returns with the deadeye threat, "But wait, you don't think I live a pop life now? That's hate, you could get popped right now." Always frosty for the kid, Prodigy takes the scicle from his cells and sticks it through your frame. In the end, you're so dead that "all they had was your picture at the funeral".

## THE OPUS MOVEMENT TWO

TRI-EIGHT MUSIC SUPPLY 12006 12"

There are few songs in HipHop, and those that do pop up usually deal with memory in a very particular way. Fierce but vulnerable, proud and celebratory, with a hint of remorse, crushed and bruised but never pathetic. A truly sad rastasun tries in the strength of the struggles. It treats the passing of a memory as seriously as the passing of the person. Like Proust bring his madeleine, Stet surveys everyday experience and ties it's fading memory from touch in "The River", a makeshift elegy for a dear character named Brain. While air, water, wind and sound remind him of enough, the "River" in question reminds him of a single crying mother, at which point Stet laments, "Td take all the busses in far one more conversation/Wc can sit in the shade and discuss the meaning of sacred/care/ Cause I can't see the garden no more, just the apolis". The Opus's weave of effin strings and enchanted see-saws are pleasant enough, but it's Shag alone who inhabits the life out of these minutes. "And I wish your name was on the guest list to my show," he finishes, "I want you to see me finding my freedom."

## TAKE FO' SUPERSTARS PARTY AT THE LUAU

TAKE FOR KARMA CD12"

All torque and no pop, make Mannie Fresh a dull producer, so new and then he leaves the Megahits to seek New Orleans' local talent and maybe cop a cataphract. This compilation of local legends puts the Cash Money Millions phenomenon in proper perspective. Though DJ Duke and Jubilee may not get much dash outside of Louisiana, in the Big Easy they're as popular as whoever's running against David Duke. Like Washington DC's super-regional Go Go community, it's clear that New Orleans rap looks elsewhere for perfect beats. Though the (Hawaiian piggyback party) Iau theme seems a stretch, the ghostly steel drums of the title track turn this calypso out. "What�hink you Juvenile?" June B scots before dispatching one of the scene's many nutza ferocious. DJ Jubilee's "Do The Mario" lyrics the slithzien refrain from Nimmie's Super Mario Brothers and finds Willie Puckett, Junie and others inching headbutts over lethal stabs and cues. Though it's obviously a staged recording of a "live" party, most of the exceptional cuts here are filled with call-and-response cues to do dances like "the Mursusaurus" and "the Gatsbytrap". A clearer directive comes with Jubilee's original recording of Juvenile's eventual hit "Back That Azz Up", basically The Jackson 5's "I Want You Back" getting sliced apart by synths and spiky scratches. ☐

# Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

## EUGENE CHADBOURNE

AYER UNDEAD

DR08 321/LC1999 CD

## ZU & EUGENE CHADBOURNE

MOTORHELLINGTON

PEL 57721 CD

Mac Ribot paid his tribute on the recent album *Saints*, and now fellow guitarist Chadbourne applies his spiky sound and manic dashes to the business of honouring saxophonist Albert Ayler. Within the long shadow of his cultured eccentricity, Chadbourne shuns Ayler's deep interest in mimetic musics and physical properties of sound. Amplified into distortion, or acoustic in company with bassist Joe Williamson and drummer Uli Jennessen, Chadbourne is at his most consistently satisfying on this project.

Motorhellington finds him hanging out with an Italian quartet to do neatly reflect the chance to cry havoc with the Stockholmsk overload, although armed with trumpet, sax, bass and drums they sound a touch insubstantial, tailoring Black Sabbath's "Iron Man". A varied and interesting programme follows, celebrating Kraftwerk, Don Cawley, Mingus, John, Sly Saxon and James Brown before mercilessly assaulting Motörhead's "Saorfin". The guitar work is often startling, and Chadbourne serves up some of his finest and most incisive vocal moments.

## VATTEL CHERRY'S [TRIO]

VIRTUE

DISCIPLINES

COMMERCIAL FREE JAZZ NO NUMBER 2002

Vattel Cherry has backed the powerful tenor of Charles Gayle. Disciplines finds him in very different circumstances, intimate contexts that encourage contemplative engagement with his instrument. On the first disc he interacts with reedman Jackie Blane and guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Ray Charles, on the second with Nicole Cherry on violin and John Danker playing bass clarinet. The instrumentation of each set poses particular challenges; there's chamber cautiousness to both and (especially on the latter) rewards that only come with close attention and carefully controlled response. Cherry will and it would be good to hear his sister's confident improvising in less chaotic surroundings.

## STEVE COLEMAN &

FIVE ELEMENTS

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

LAEL 0001/LC05344/HM0332 2XCD

Concert recordings from Montpellier, made in the course of two days during July 2001 and packaged with customary care by the French label. It's a relaxed, loose-limbed set enabling Coleman to stretch out and fount his melodic fluency and well-defined articulation. His alto lines slither like quicksilver through an elliptically rolling ensemble grooves supplied by piano, two percussionists and electric bass. Trompetists Ambrose Campbell-Amenmose and Jonathan Rinlayen add fiery embellishments and supportive solos. Bebop dues are paid in pieces by Parker and Monk, there's Mel Walker's "Straight Ahead" and a Jerry Goldsmith number

as well as Coleman originals including two new compositions. Coleman at his most directly pleasurable.

## CURLEW

MEET THE CURLEWS  
CUNEIFORM RUNE187 CD

Saxophonist George Corn�헤이크 formed Curlew, an electric hawk outfit, in 1979. His aspirational remains dominant on their eighth album and guitarist Guy Williams, the other long-term member, continues to do both daring and to the point. New bassist Red Kelley, who penned the opening piece, has worked with Hugh Hopper. New drummer Bruce Goldin has something of Chet Baker's approach to marking out acoustic space. So far so good, but the lurking duality of Chet Baker's acoustic piano playing is a source of unease, loosening the tight knot between meandering and eventually a sense of flatness in the music.

## PAUL DUNMILL & TONY BIANCO

I YOU  
FMR 03010 CD

In the Utoma Too, drummer Tony Bianco hosts the two tenors of Julian and Simon Peacock. In Peacock's absence, Dunmill has pulled out all the stops for I You. The opener "Eternal Dance" is a churning tour de force with the saxophonist in mighty form. Cunnell leads throughout, leaving the drummer to supply the feverish backstop for his glistening conundrums and to bed his stinkies blinding. After 30 minutes Bianco, drained of energy, sensibly requested a slow number to follow. Cunnell obliged, but without placating his intensity that persists through a third tenor solo and final soprano with highly energetic, compulsive performances.

## GNU

MIDNIGHT BREAKFAST  
CUBIC MUSIC 06 CO

Gnu is a Japanese quartet comprising keyboards, bass and drums, plus Dan Sofio on clarinet. Masahiko Ono on alto sax, bass clarinet, keyboards, electronics and the bulk of compositional credits. On this appealing half-hour set of vignettes, electric jazz busyness is cut through with minimalist sparseness and quirks. "Straw People" suggests a Canterbury denouement among the cocktail lounge (see "Apricot Jam" on Robert Wyatt's *Forseen Jetson*). Midnight Breakfast is designed for easy access yet is pleasingly off-centre.

## GREG KELLEY &

JASON LESCALLETT

ERTHWAITE 019 CD

New Englander Lescallett, who works with tape loops and computer, has been heard previously as a guest of minspen, trumpeter Kelley's fascinating project with saxophonist Bob Ramey, on the album *In Which We Slept*. Parker-Dexter... Forbom Green results from two live duets, a solo by Kelley and another overseen by Lescallett. A church and a gallery are cited as

recording venues. Whatever subsequent treatments have occurred, these four pieces hang together like hinged panels. Kelley's spluttering evolves into a massive drone laced with trumpet shards, shift then booming then juddering resonance is built from leaking breath, land siren and crackle erupt from a slow moving parabola, frosty vibrations narrow to gaseous blasts which open into long reverberations. Kelley keeps on questing. And yet the title is a conscious *Banana* pun.

## JOHN MAYER'S INDO-JAZZ

FUSIONS  
SHIVA NATARAJ KING OF  
DANCE  
PMT 806911 CD

The classic recordings violinist and composer Mayer made during the mid-1960s with saxophonist Joe Harriott have proved a mixed blessing, in that he is all too easily classified only as a historic figure. Affinities between jazz and Indian music have been exploited often in the intervening years but Mayer's buoyant arrangements retain their charm. This current album perpetuates the ideal established in the original project yet it sounds fresh and there's strong playing from the youthful ensemble, especially saxophonist Carlos Lopez-Real who has also written two sensuous pieces. Composers Stan Sulzman and David Murphy have responded to commissions; and Mayer relocates Anton Bruckner to Maenras – and it works. Mayer has his place in history but his music still brims with vitality.

## PARKER/HASLAM/EDWARDS

PARKER/HASLAM/EDWARDS

SLAM 314 CO

The reworking of this concert recording, made in Oxford in September 2003, seems calculated to let tension mount. George Haslam kicks off with a fiery, approachable baritone solo, then consolidates the welcome with his Hungarian horn, the bugle. Evan Parker pulls a 15 minute circular breathing spectacular out of the bag, conducting a cued (it often seems) with a phantom soprano partner. John Edwards sustains the momentum through his tenor, thoughtful double bass solo, then grapples with the surge and recoil of Parker's snarling tenor. Finally the bassist stands squarely between these two, compellingly empathetic and minded desimilar saxophonists like a referee ever-handy to adjudicating the anticipated tussle. It leaves you wanting more.

## PERRY/STEVENS/LYTTON/ TAYLOR/PREVOST

IMPROVISING PERCUSSIONIST

FMR 615061 CO

These recordings were made in 1974 to complement a series of articles written at that time by Trevor Taylor for *Drums And Percussion* magazine. Compiled as a CO, the five sets usually to the part played by each drummer in developing percussive options for improvised music. Frank Ferris is characteristically meditative amidst his gongs, hollowing out a virtual temple

in metallic sound. John Stevens, the album's dedicatee, trills absorbing fumes of snail, incessant and concentrated gestures. Paul Lytton, with his electronically enhanced sit, creates unique arrangements of timbre and texture, a variegated surface of grain, hatch and shade. Taylor too deploys electronics as part of his expressive drum drama. Eddie Prevost is meticulous and precise as ever, crafting lucid sound-forms through extreme discipline. A percussion showcase may appear a speckled taste, but there's a spectacular improvising here for any audience.

## IRENE SCHWEIZER

CHICAGO PIANO SOLO

INNOK 005 CD

## CO STREIFF/ IRENE SCHWEIZER

TWIN LINES

INNOK 073 CO

New 60, and too often neglected in discussions of improvised music and jazz piano, Schweizer is a key figure on the European scene. When the time was right she plunged energetically into the ferment of free blowing; subsequently she reconstructed her music on the ground cleared during that improbable phase, and has become a marvellous soloist as well as a responsive group player. The Chicago set ranks with her best solo work. Robust rhythmic passages or delicate statements from the instrument's interior are executed with almost inhuman precision, yet her sensitivity to dynamic nuance is remarkable. She can emulate the warmth of Abdullah Ibrahim, the angularity of Monk, the fire of Taylor and remain distinctively Schweizer in Kersus's phrase, she knows time.

Her collaboration with alto saxophonist Co Stroiff, also a Swiss musician although most widely known for her work with the Vienna Art Orchestra, began in 1980. Irene Schweizer played drums in the duo. On piano she still summons rhythmic and Stroiff, who shines her interest in African music, proves an entirely sympathetic partner. Stroiff seemed most of the material. Even when playing ballads there's toughness and bite in her playing that matches the pianist's resilience and Schweizer shows her capacity to be a willing and imaginative accompanist, as well as a good, testing partner.

## ARCHIE SHEPP &

HORACE PARLAN

SWING LOW

ELEPHANT ELECO CO

Previous meetings have confirmed the affinity between Parlan's piano playing, craggy left hand and bluesy chugging, and Shepp's seasoned tone and emotionally charged historical sensibility. This relaxed, informal session was captured live before a Zurich hotel audience in 1991. The material tells of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot", "Go Down Moses", "Make Me A Pallet On The Floor", "See See Rider", Gershwin, Ellington, Shepp's tribute to Bessie Smith, Portis to Billie Holiday. Shepp plays tenor interspersed with alto and indulges his need to sing. It's a dignified, affable wailor. □

# Outer Limits

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

## VITO ACCONCI

FOUR SALIVA STUDIES  
SOLINTZ FICKER PRESS SQUINTED CD

## CHRISTOF MIGONE CRACKERS

LOCIUS 1 CD

New York artist Vito Acconci belongs to that generation of conceptual players, including Chris Burden and Dennis Oppenheim, who were more interested in what the body can do than what it's actually made of. Early videotape performances featured Acconci showing his hand down his throat and keeping it there until he started gagging. The highly amplified soundtrack for his 1971 video, *Wetworks: Four Saliva Studies*, is presented both in its unedited entirety and electronically filtered as "Undo" by Christof Migone and Alexandre St-Onge. This potentially tame exchange between physical sound-making and its digitally morphed phantom comes packaged with a blob of dead spit inside the sleeve. At least, that's what it looks like.

Christof Migone's *Crackers* takes this notion a stage further, writing people to crack their fingers, backbones, knees, elbows and whatever, then ranning the results through his laptop. Now that mobile phones have superseded inaudible crackling as the most irritating public noise, there's something deeply depressing about commanding when some of these clacks and pops came from.

## MARTIN ARCHER & GERALDINE MONK

ANGEL HIGH WIRES  
LA COORNA RACHTA CH 49 CD

In an act of human endurance to rival anything by Acconci, Archer and Monk prepared to record their mournful cycle of solemnly fragile songs by listening to the entire Schubert Lieder (which stretch over 21 individual CDs) in a single sitting. The experience left them contemplatively low, such delicately expressed sentiments "might melt us in a world where music has become less longing and more squalid with compressed roots".

Assuming that in these hollering performances are Julie Teppetts, Chris Cullin on drums, Mick Beck on bass and Philip Thomas on prepared piano, these still scorching their heads over music's capacity for highnesses evidently haven't been listening to enough Schubert.

## JOHANNES BERGMARK & UNN FAHLSTROM

MOUTH TO MOUTH METHOD  
FIREWORK EDITION FER0100 CD

## LEIF ELLGREN

LATRINE  
FIREWORK EDITION FER0101 CD

An emphasis upon physical endurance and individual physicality are both aspects of the same digital delirium: a nostalgic flight back to the body as refuge from the weightlessness of today's data systems. Mouth to Mouth Method presents two individual players serious tongue hockey with each other, while the listener is "kissed, licked, chewed, consumed, vomited and regurgitated" over the course of its uninterrupted 71 minutes and 23 seconds.

Reminding us that all music is, by definition, waste product, Sweden's Leif Ellgren recorded the issue material for Latrine on the toilet. Whatever squeaks, splashes and surprises were originally produced, however, have been so heavily reprocessed that they now exist only as a series of consonant metallic layers. Perhaps in the age of the laptop, there's no need for such stag party novelties as Jeff Records' *The Competition Contest or the grand Frazee feature, but either seems preferable to something that could easily have been recorded in any room of the house without soiling the carpet.*

## GRAND MAL PERFECT FIT

UNSOUND 06 LN03 CD

There's a moment on this rather innocuous collection of songs and assemblages when Ann Wellmer's dron machine locks into a steady march beat, percussionist Justin Bennett produces some icy resonances on his theremin and Steve Blitsch lets her normally jumpy vocals relax into a laidback purr. For its brief duration, "One For The Road" provides some structured relief from the monotonous heiform conventions waiting to be rediscovered on the remaining 15 tracks, suggesting that these guys should really think about getting rhythmic more often. Grand Mal will appeal to anyone who still believes that it's a (dead) cabaret, old chum.

## IF, BWANA

I, ANGELICA

POGUS 21005 2XCD

Making a big-ass noise with a minimum of fuss, Al Margis collides guitars, tapes, computer manipulations with analogue synths and steel coils over an exuberantly sprawling 2x CD set, subtitled "Nick Nax" and "Puddy Whack" respectively. Among the generously proportioned sensory assaults on offer are "Guitars By AF", a maddeningly insatiable rock drill of a track, "Walking Der Dog", where scraped metal and feedback accompany "let the dog on a romp through the great outdoors, and "Goo Pond", a gloomy, rolling sullen of apocalyptic prophecies. This is the kind of stuff that needs to take up space, and Margis knows how to fit it admirably.

## CARSTEN JOST

YOU DON'T NEED A  
WEATHERMAN TO KNOW  
WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS  
LUDWIK 0001 CD

To end ten years on in its underground campaign against US capitalist imperialism, the Weatherman organization produced a songbook offering radical new lyrics to time-honored standards such as the Supremes' "Stop In The Name Of Love" which consequently began: "Stop your imperialist aggression/We're going to smash the state". Accompanied by images of riot cops, burning cars and anti-WTO protesters, the bleak abstractions of Jeff's brooding techno-pop take on a darker, more serious edge. "Yellow Brigade" opens with a burst of bosting ("Bemehnd") with random synthetic garnishes. The beats on this Austrian release are implacable, the sense of

momentum formidable. Should be bursting down a disco near you soon.

## MESSER CHUPS

MISS LIBIDO

SOLINZU NO NUMBER CD

## MESSER CHUPS

VAMP BABES

SOLINZU HYPER UTESOV NO NUMBER CD

## MESSER FÜR FRAU MULLER

DREAMS

HYPER UTESOV NO NUMBER CD

## NOZKHZ CHUPS

BRIDE OF THE ATOM

HYPER UTESOV NO NUMBER CD

Embedding elements of decadent capitalism that even most Westerners would shun away from, any Russian lounge mutants Oleg Kashev and Oleg Gulin (who in one form or another are responsible for all of these aliases) play twangy synth & fiddle music for people who know that the future actually happened over 40 years ago, was scripted by Ed Wood and illustrated by Eric Stanton while Crisswell and the fatter ghost of Bela Lugos is seated on. Reversing the power of the Omni analogue synth, *The Man From Planet X* and peppy little pop numbers with titles like "The Second Advent Of Elv", "The Pomegranate", "Concord Twit" and "Go, Satan, Go!" Above all, marvel at what sounds like sampled dialogue taken from, it says it won't say, ex-Soviet Soviet B monologues. This is the state of the Lateente Revolution.

## AKI ONDA

PRECIOUS MOMENTS

SOFMUSIC SOM102 CD

Having formerly worked under the project name Hanoi Spiritus from 1991-96, Japanese composer Aki Onoda has been creating intimate solo releases since his 1998 debut, *Beautiful Contradiction*. The dry synapses and hemmed spaces of "Somewhere" and "Gazing Into The Eyes, Then Closing The Eyes" tend, like the CD's increasingly folded cardstock sleeve, to be little hard to get into, but the thoughtful blending of electronics, acoustic instrumentation and field recordings on "Forward A Place In The Sun" and the charming "Fish Don't Know It's Raining" are far more accommodating.

## KNUT REMOND

DEEP STRUCTURE, COSMICS  
VOL. 3

V RECORDS V001 CD

Whether fleshed up on electric signboards, flyposted or carved in stone, the subtlest shades of Jenny Holzer's aholicatistics lies in the least to which they confound meaning in the least, number of words, succeeding through the deceptive speed with which they blur truth with supposition. Working with soprano Konika Bruggmann, Swiss composer Remond has factured and decelerated Holzer's words to the point where they become animalistic cries. Set against a digitally distorted background, this process is quite effective, but it's the dramatic live duet in Zurich's Echer-Wyss-Platz Underpass that makes the hair stand on end.

## MARINA ROSENFIELD & THE SHEER FROST ORCHESTRA

DROP, HOP, DRONE, SCRATCH,

SLIDE & A FOR ANYTHING

CHAR 020A 016 CD

The gizzards produced by running a slide up the strings of an electric guitar brings with it the shift of ascension, using nail polish bottles as slides are feeding the results through a number of laptops, whose operators include Kaffe Matthews and the ubiquitous Ikuo Mori. The Sheer Frost Orchestra have taken this simple yet symbolic effect into an entirely new dimension. The result is a subversive form of Kapptrack capable of going from the particular to the infinite in a matter of seconds.

## PHILIP SAMARTZIS &

SACHIKO M

ARTEFACT

SOLO/CD LIMITED EDITIONS NO NUMBER CD

It may appear just a tad disingenuous to apply the title "Surface Noise" to one of the highly strung semi-transparent sonics of digital noise. Sachiko M and Samartzis have created in this provocative musical collaboration. That is until you realize what these upper frequency pitches are quietly doing to the inside lining of your ears. Fortunately, on "Rapture" the duo are more preoccupied with questions of digital aphasia and auditory collapse to do to any lasting body damage. An aggressive physical presence doesn't require anyone alone.

## CONRAD SCHNITZLER

CONAL 2001

SUMMERGENCE SU0093 CD

A former student of artist Joseph Beuys, whose work in the 60s and 70s concentrated mainly on issues of physicality and extremes of duration in a rapidly accelerating media environment, Schnitzer has developed a fantastic sense of both timing and attack. Having made contributions to the German electronic scene, as an early member of Langzeit-Dream and in partnership with Roderick Moebius of Cluster, it was his releases in the early 1980s that gave Krautrock a harder new wave edge. In fact, one of the three untitled tracks presented here, a sumptuously harsh excursion into abstract sound, was first recorded in 1981 and mixed only in 2001. Bold, waywardly uncompromising and truly visionary.

## SPUNK

FILTERED THROUGH FRIENDS

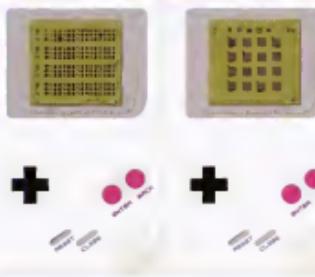
RUNE GRAMMOPHON RGR020 CD

The Norwegian female anarchist quarter's 1999 debut album, *Waste Site*, was fully translated, decarred, "The only thing I know is that it's not a vacuum cleaner", was a relaxed symposium on the nature of noise. The satire of running is often to get at what something's not that here we have the sputtering, headlong pop of Kim Horvath's *Alvehus Pumper*, the dacky meditative lenguages of "Italy Falling Slowly" from Spunk's Kristin Andriksen, Sun Demon's twisted dub-Hi effects and the spiky asymmetries of Losse Marhaug's *Septemberunderdigt 2*. □

# Ether Talk

## Dispatches from the digital domain.

This month: Nanoloop and Little Sound DJ software is creating a scene devoted to the Game Boy. By Magnus Larsson



It's not a toy: Sequencing on the Game Boy (left); Tobi-Wan and Lay-DJ from Swedish duo Puss

Some of the most significant musical leaps in the 20th century came from artists deliberately misusing technology, from Edgard Varèse assembling recording devices with multiple recording heads, via Nono Jaro Park distorting soap operas into a variety of gestural patterns by placing a magnet on top of a television set, to Oval smacking the surface of CDs and sampling the resulting skipping noises.

Scratching, feedback, tape loops – these are all strategies enabling musicians to exploit a given technology's hidden potential in a revolutionary way, using the right tool for the wrong task. Which is exactly what Game Boy composing is about.

Last year, Hamburg art student Oliver Wüthrich created an experimental sound sequencing program called Nanoloop. At about the same time, the tracker software (an application that allows composition using sample-based instruments) Little Sound DJ was programmed by Swedish technology student Jöhan Kotimäki. Both these two sequencing applications both come stored on ordinary game cartridges and allow musicians to compose multiple sound loops which can be synthesized and edited in real time using an ordinary Game Boy console. Made by enthusiasts curious about the possibilities

inherent in their old toys, this software is winning new fans by the day, and Game Boy composers are already forming a community using the Nanoloop and Little Sound DJ websites to swap MP3s and advertise their gigs.

Sporting dark sunglasses and shockingly pink tops, Stockholm group Puss (Sweden for Kies) have made live Game Boy performances a specialty. Their unique blend of vintage bleeps and bizzes have rendered them a small but devoted cult following in their hometown. Using two Game Boys connected by a pink sync cable, the duo have already played a handful of gigs and released their *We Are Puss* album on their own Pussasound label late last year.

Ever since the late Gympie Mayo invented the first Nintendo Game Boy in 1987, millions of gamers all over the world have spent hours and hours hunting over Super Mario or Pokémon games – and listening to the background music made by composers such as Nobuo Uematsu and Kenji Ito. The relatively poor sound quality of the Game Boy's inbuilt speakers forced them to create strong melodies rather than tracks based on harmonies or rhythms, a limiting aesthetic that appeals to today's breed of Game Boy musicians as well.

The Game Boy has got four channels to work

with, which leaves us with a total of eight since we're using one each," says Puss's Tobi-Wan (aka Tobias von Holstein). "The limits are extreme, which makes you work hard to optimise your sound. You can't be lazy, as you can with a 24-channel studio. We haven't even explored our full capacity yet – we've never used more than four sounds at a time. It's been all about using melodies to create nice beats. Harmony might be where to go next. To produce a chord using Little Sound DJ, you have to work with arpeggios, and a beautiful minor arpeggio plus a bass line and a kick and fading out into a chord just makes me want to cry."

Earlier this year the Oslo Brut label followed suit by releasing *Nanoloop 0.4*, a four CD compilation album including contributions from artists such as Membow, Krustoid, Bpectrum From Blechton, Pita, Vladislav Delay, DMV Politics and Stock, Hasses & Walemat. The compilation is the result of a project begun at Nanoloop creator Oliver Wüthrich's German art school, and the first serious attempt of gathering several composers on one Game Boy themed album.

Is theory you can instantaneously an endless amount of Game Boys. A fantastic set up of the moment is that of Game Boy musician and software developer BCylinder, working with four



consoles connected to homemade noise generators and a effects unit by the little Sound DJ software. Other artists involved in this 'Game Boy scene' include Role Model (Little Sound DJ inventor Jöhan Kotimäki's alias), Yass-80, hoffF, 9955, Poodle Screen, Nullsleep, Bud Melvin, WidgetPhunk, Coxox and Handheld.

Invariably, the scene has already been dismissed as a bunch of kids shrilling their piano lessons to play Tekken and Kuzukura Kurumi, some people attending the first Puss gig even suspected that Lay-DJ and Tobi-Wan were simply playing games over backing tapes. So what does the group say to those accuse them of playing toy music?

"Nothing," admits Tobi-Wan. "I totally agree Game Boys are toys. But at the same time, that's the beauty of it. All you need is four channels. And with a cheap old Game Boy unit and an even cheaper piece of software, anyone can do this. Which proves that you don't need a lot of effects and devices to make nice breaks and beats. It's not about the size of your studio, it's about what you do with what you have." □

Nanoloop 1.0 is out now on Discos Brut. We Are Puss is out on Pussasound. Websites [www.nanoloop.com](http://www.nanoloop.com), [www.pussasound.com](http://www.pussasound.com), [www.pusstracks.com](http://www.pusstracks.com)

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For the last 12 months there has been a feverishly busy 'creative bootleg' culture growing faster than you can say 'See me see'. At the heart of it all is Beemselector ([www.beemselector.com](http://www.beemselector.com)), a blog site (the simple diary-style Web-updating/publishing system allowing anyone and their granny to maintain a site) set up by 'The DJ' (aka one Daniel Sledgby) and the more mysterious 'Monkiesboy'. Beemselector contains a monster list of all the semi-illegal, Frankenzenian hybrids currently rotting in a bootleg near you. Kurtis Russ' "George Gets His Freak On" (George Michael jammed up with Missy Elliott), Jacki Lee's churning "Get Ur Nib Cock On" (Jackie Lee vs. Missy), Soulive's "Smells Like Body" (you guessed it: Neneh Cherry versus Destiny's Child), and the leader of this particular pack, London project Gris Tox, on top, with the likes of Whitney Houston's "Wanna Dance With Somebody" laid

### over Kraftwerk's "Trans-Europe Express".

According to Beemselector, Missy's the favourite bootlegging source (see KettG's recent *Violent Tard* release *Freebootin'ly*), closely followed by Michael Jackson. The site will guide you to countless "whacked" (sic) top ten bootleg lists, umpteen couplings (Britney and Aphex, anyone?), links to other bootleggers' sites and, most importantly, MP3s in abundance! get download manager on before the authorities nudge in.

Unholy methemines aside, we all know that rock corrupts the soul. Or so says Pastor Gary Greenfield, who still insists on campaigning against revisionist messages in rock songs – messages impressionable listeners cannot directly perceive, and therefore have no power to resist. The subconscious mind interprets the messages, and rock groups use bootlegged speech to influence their audience in strange

and unChristian ways. **Backmasked Messages** ([sbe.darm.edu/~subliminal/backmasked\\_message.htm](http://sbe.darm.edu/~subliminal/backmasked_message.htm)) is a site set up to examine this theory by generously supplying song snippets played forwards and in reverse. Queen's classic "Another One Bites The Dust" makes "It's fun to smoke marijuanna", The Beatles' "Revolution Number 9" hilariously becomes "Turn me on dead meat", while their "I'm So Tired" fuelled exaggerated rumours of Paul McCartney's death in 1966. "Paul is a dead man, miss him, miss him, Miss him" There's not much new outrage here: the site retreads the protocold Judas Priest teenage suicide saga, and there's a whole page devoted to Led Zeppelin's "Stairway To Heaven", a popular tribute to Satan. But at least having the samples to hand allows you to make up your own mind: just keep the Lord close by your side.

ANNE HILDE NESET



# Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Flowers in concrete, graffiti, Washington DC style

## FREE AGENTS: A HISTORY OF WASHINGTON DC GRAFFITI ROGER GASTMAN (COMPILER) SOFT SKULL PRESS, Pbk \$20

## DONDI WHITE: STYLE MASTER GENERAL: THE LIFE OF GRAFFITI ARTIST DONDI WHITE

ANDREW 'ZEPHYR' WITTEN & MICHAEL WHITE  
REED BOOKS/WALTER COLLINS Pbk \$35

BY JUHA HSU

The code of the streets is found on the walls, met with grace and tested in struggles and squabbles. In a 1995 interview, legendary graffiti artist Dondi White explained his first real exposure to those sacred languages: "I think I got into it on my own, because as I would go to different neighborhood tools I would always look on the walls to see what gang was in the neighborhood. I was always reading shit on the walls." Once Dondi himself started dabbling in graffiti in the mid-1970s, he and his posse maneuvered the thoroughfares of New York with the keen awareness of amateur cartographers, keeping track of which way brazen, raw, what-brought-beautiful the freshest styles and what landmarks afforded maximum visibility. Not only did writers like Dondi or Washington DC's Free Agents have an acute understanding of Kypton and bubble letters, they were educated in the language of space and geography.

Though these two books are both about 'shit

on the walls', they're also about how different those walls looked in two very different cities. For all its faults, *Free Agents: A History Of Washington DC Graffiti* is an indispensable contribution to the culture's mystique, since it isn't about New York and Hip Hop isn't giving the off-camera cats. Outside of Michael Witten's *Graffiti*, pieces of Stephen Powers's *The Art Of Getting Up* and the numerous volumes on Los Angeles gang graffiti, few books have strayed from the 'canonical' stores of the five boroughs and Wild Style.

Editor Roger Gastman, who first caught the bug as a part of the city's proud hardcore scene, does an admirable job introducing readers to the DC area's many eccentric characters. There's Scratch Master Kyle (SMK) leaving his infantile in front of the White House and roughnecks Cast, keeping a running log of enemies to beat down alongside his golf conquests. We meet Cool Disco Dan, a semi-suicidal Go-Go golf legend with an almost terrifying addiction to getting up. At one point, he even begins yelling his own name at every Go-Go show he attends, essentially 'tagging' the group's live recordings.

The problem with *Free Agents* is that it rarely plays to its own strengths, opting to trumpet individual legend over regional exceptionalism. Washington DC is weird. It is one of the nation's most dangerous cities as well as one of its most sacred. It is a heavily palisaded silver dotted with lawmakers and instruments, and yet it boasts some of the more storied traditions of artful vandalism.

refracted through the McHep, hardcore and Go-Go scenes. Contributor Neal Edmon makes it a point to introduce the local quirks and hardcore tendencies of the city's unique Go-Go culture in the adolescent Disco Dan chapter, but the book as a whole rarely stays from its 'yearbook' style approach, meaning little attention to chronology, context, or local and sonic politics.

In contrast, *Dondi White: Style Master General* is important precisely because Dondi's story is so New York: a sweet soul full of life, favour and contradiction. Curators Andrew Witten and Michael White do an astounding job putting together the pieces of Dondi's life, collecting elementary school drawings, rare photographs, private sketches and family portraits to make this one of the most compelling, beautiful and stylish graffiti books ever published. From his childhood sketches of 70s basketball legend Julius Erving, and Jesus on lined fiber paper to his 1980s gallery work, the book succeeds in toning down, that is to say that outlined all of Dondi's pieces in maniacally diverse, unison strokes.

It is often argued that the 'right' authorising frameworks are the only thing preventing art from seeing the true graffiti craftsmanship for what it is: not primitive but providential, not reckless but careful, transient and disciplined, too fast to stand around and intellectualise, forget the colour wheels and canvases. The dozens of glimpses into Dondi's private sketchbook – bold and clean black ink against aged, frayed and formerly white paper – attest to

the man's precision. In commenting on his train work, Witten (better known as golf pioneer and Dondi associate Zephyr) and an assortment of Old School cats don't merely memorialise a fallen writer, they mark the passing of a man who could turn a steaming silver slug into an undeniably and confounding work of art.

Well, the art world did catch on, and the book is also about that: that odd early 80s moment when graffiti/Hip Hop culture commenced with downtown gallery hipsters, one terrific two-page photo shows Dondi and sconcer (and Wild Style artist) Patti Astor at a downtown opening, replete with fine wine and a suave Jean-Michel Basquiat looking to be looked at in the background. Dondi's pieces from this period are unsettling and many at first they seem uncomfortable and tentative on canvas, but with pieces like *Anne Damer* or *Psychological Suspense* it was clear that his minimisation was by choice. Given the focused childhood of school and church that Witten and White describe, Dondi's juxtaposition of religious and B-boy iconography, as well as his interest in gallery exhibition, seemed a natural progression.

By the time he died in 1998, Dondi White had done everything a one-time 'vend' could ever hope for. Ultimately, Dondi fell victim to the AIDS crisis that has grown up and flourished alongside his beloved culture, and in this regard he was as much a victim of New York, as he was an exemplar of the city's wide-eyed, rigs-to-niches possibilities.



Banging the drums: Alan Licht (left); Santaria singer (right)

## AN EMOTIONAL MEMOIR OF MARTHA QUINN

ALAN LICHT

DRUG CITY PRK \$11.95

BY BLEDDYN BUTCHER

For those who didn't grow up on the MTV hit, the title may require explanation: Martha Quinn is the girl-next-door V to whom New York avant-guitarist, writer and Wine connoisseur Alan Licht attributes his fondness for twisted 80s pop. If she is the book's patron saint, The Thompson Twins' 'Hold Me Now' provides its unlikely madeline. Hearing this aesthetic abomination on the radio for the first time in 14 years, Licht

recognises, with something very like schadenfreude, that 'remembering every nuance of a bad New Wave hit from the 80s... gives me more pleasure than remembering every moment of a favourite punk single'. A wrylying development by any stretch.

This book – 'pumpkin' better catches its flavour – charts his wondering response to this shock. He is not unenlightened: he knows 'better'. Why isn't he modified? The short answer is he grew up, the world changed and happiness somehow lost its cachet. Licht doesn't, of course, jump straight to this pole conclusion. Nor does he bring a polemic drum. He simply stops to consider his changing

attitudes, making tangential connections which evoke both a generation and a period. His account is not so much Boomer's Story as Slacker's Riff. The confused cultural moment it catches is Our Very Own.

Licht, the self-dubbed 'Evan Dando of Noise', is a versatile, restless musician (Low Child, Blue Humans, Rue On) and writer. His unusual tastes are balanced by a more general awareness of trends. He doesn't reject the past; he gathers its threads into contemporary sense. He notes, for instance, that, while electronica was potentially 'more pure than punk' in its break with tradition, 'computers continue the trend away

from communism towards personal evolution'; that, while 'acid predicated a trip that induced spiritual awakening', the Internet 'has no religious overtones – it's merely a big mall'. The argument's not unfamiliar – technological advance prompts spiritual retreat – but nor is it stout. Licht's prose is full of good humour and dry drollery. It doesn't take itself too seriously. Instead of loudly lamenting the current cultural impasse, Licht cheerfully anticipates change. He makes a convincing case with unfluffed immediacy.

So The Thompson Twins won't be complete waste of time after all. □

## DIVINE UTTERANCES: THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRO-CUBAN SANTERIA

KATHERINE J HAGEDORN  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION PRESS  
PRK + CD \$24.95

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

Along with the rich musical heritage of West Africa's Yoruba civilization, slaves brought to the Caribbean also imported the seeds of a syncretic religion known as Santaria, the spiritual confluence of elements borrowed from Catholicism, traditional African worship of orishas (spirits) and a form of French spiritualism which gained currency in the Caribbean during the 19th century. The theatrical and musical liturgy of Santaria, with African antecedents, are central to what is in essence a religious lingua franca, a faith shared by members of disparate tribes thrown together in the New World. It is this component of the faith that fascinates Katherine J Hagedorn, author of *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santaria* and professor of music at Southern California's Pomona College, prompting her to study the distinctions between

Santaria's sacred and secular elements and the social context within which its musicians, singers and dancers operate. Her journey to Cuba, the fountainhead of Santaria as it is currently practised, and her apprenticeship as a bata drummer are integral elements of her monograph.

The author prefaces each chapter with depictions of Santaria's cosmology. Given the density of sociological, musical, economic and political information on every page of *Divine Utterances*, this device succeeds in keeping the essence of Santaria close at hand. The rigour informing Hagedorn's analysis never overwhelms the lasting sense of awe instilled by her initial exposure to a falakor troupe's bata drums when she was still a graduate student in the late 80s. Homoeopathic touches of humour don't hurt either. The first portion of a chapter on religious tourism, devoted to the role played by dead ancestors in the lives of Santaria practitioners, is subtitled 'The Dead Find Parking in San Francisco'. Those who have died in vain without pharmaceutical assistance may be buried for Santaria's message.

Personal experience informs contemporary

ethnology in increasing measure. Whether this trend began in 1961 with Colin Tamboli's *The Forest People*, I can't say for sure. Suffice it to add that drama informs Hagedorn's field research: her Cuban apartment is ransacked (unsubmissively in the same state of security); she tears a leg muscle while evading an attacker on a Havana street, and, in an extended interview that threads through the chapter devoted to the groundbreaking group Conjunto Folclórico, she hears how their dancer, María Teresa Linares survived being shot by a disgruntled member. And always, paroxysms fingers in the humid Cuban air. Few acquaintances linger at the author's base of operations; tellingly, those colleagues who do visit admonish her not to speak of 'La Bárba' (The Beard, a colloquial reference to Castro). She reflects in numerous asides on the culture of self-hatred, carefully nurtured by the Cuban government.

A model of scholarly rigour, Hagedorn annotates her writings extensively, and her book's final pages contain an extensive bibliography, a filmography (referencing key documents by Francesco Agababa), Hagedorn's drum teacher. These crisp, spacious recordings deliver the full intensity of Afro-Cuban liturgical music, being unique to *Divine Utterances*, the CD alone more than justifies the book's cost. □

cool glossary whose value to fans of Cuban music in any form cannot be understated.

Among the book's appendices is a three page discography, indexing numerous recordings of Yoruba-derived drumming. The CD bundled with Hagedorn's book is also worthy of induction. Though several university presses continue to package CDs with their ethnomusicological titles, most fall down miserably in their presentation of them. *Divine Utterances* runs counter to the trend of haphazard and sequenced discs. Hagedorn has taken pains to integrate the full length selections of drumming and chanting found on the enclosed CD within the flow of her narrative. In addition to the track list following the table of contents, bulletted captions inserted within the text prompt the reader to cue up an appropriate selection. The CD contains, in the larger measure, music taken from Cuba and Southern California, many of these feature a group led by Francesco Agababa, Hagedorn's drum teacher. These crisp, spacious recordings deliver the full intensity of Afro-Cuban liturgical music, being unique to *Divine Utterances*, the CD alone more than justifies the book's cost. □

# Print Run



Reel Time for Kenneth Anger (left); Reel Time for Dylanesque Teamsters (right)

## MOONCHILD: THE FILMS OF KENNETH ANGER

JACK HUNTER (EDITOR)  
CREATION BOOKS PBK, \$11.95

BY BABA KOFI

Hard to believe that Kenneth Anger, underground film icon, magus and insatiable chronicler of Hollywood Babylon, is now in his seventies; difficult to conceive of any other important filmmaker — pre-war French anarchist Jean Vigo aside — whose status is founded on a body of work consisting of the six completed films of his *Magick Lantern Cycle*, with a combined running time barely exceeding that of a single full-length movie. Slim it might be, but the Anger corpus contains more than enough to sustain the brief yet startling study. *Moonchild's* three contributions keep a tight focus on the films themselves; they contain enough biographical traces of their maker to illuminate an extraordinary life. Born in 1930 and a former child actor who purportedly starred in Max Reinhardt's 1935 movie version of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Anger was weaned on the glamour,urgency and decay of Hollywood, the rotteness of which he went on to gleefully document in two scabrous volumes of Hollywood Babylon.

Anger had already made a number of shorts before he went public at the age of 17 with *Fireworks* (1947), his astonishing 15-minute debut film starring himself as the Dreamer, dreaming up his own homoerotic rite of passage at the hands of the sailors he approaches for a light. Its overt homoeroticism and gauche yet witty symbolism defied Hollywood prudence and hypocrisy, in the process bringing Anger as a sexual outlaw. Like he cared. Yet even as he sacrificed himself to a life in the images, travelling the globe in pursuit of his arcane interests and funding, he has never entirely forsaken Hollywood-inkulated production values or its taste for voluptuous images, as revealed in the surviving 1949 fragment *Puce Moment*. Quick to pick up on *Fireworks*'s debt to his own *Blood Of A Poet*, French film poet Jean Cocteau invited Anger to Paris and vainly attempted to help him get versions of *Lautreamont's* *Maldoror* and *Pauline Réage's* *The Story Of O* up and running. Anger managed to complete two shorts in Europe — *Eaux D'Artifice* and *Rabbit Moon* — before returning to America and dedicating himself more fully to cinema as magic ritual.

As an acolyte of the English magician Aleister Crowley, he came to see film making as a way of casting spells. In the process, Anger's Cocteau-

like cinema of enchantment transformed itself into an all-out "assault on the sensuous", as he puts it. From the outset, as a film maker he had rejected dialogue and narrative conventions to mount his assaults, he instead evolved brilliant montage strategies out of the advanced theories of Soviet film pioneers Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, juxtaposing image and sound, light and shade and multiple superimpositions of images to erect the extraordinary, orgiastic party of *Inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome* (1954), cut to the voluptuous organ swell and ecstatic drumming of Janecek's *Gigolos*, Mass.

His best known film, *Scorpio Rising* (1963), intertwines a biker's machine and leather festinship with images of Marlon Brando from *The Wild One* and a 2-grade Jesus movie, cut to a lollingly chosen girl group soundtrack whose lyrics are like a commentary on the action, vacuously mocking and glorifying it. The close reading Carl Rove's essay, "Blue Velvet", gives to *Scorpio Rising* underscores the brilliance of Anger's montage of competing and complementary attractions. Rove makes clear how his uncanny grasp of the feminine emotional dynamics of American teen pop permitted him to simultaneously contrast and intensify the film's masculine and masochistic death drives through

the soundtrack's pile-up of rockabilly elegies.

After Rove's lucid examination of Anger the montege wizard, Anna Powell's "A Torch For Lucifer" chapter unpacks the symbolism through which he enacts his movies' magikal transformations. Her keys to the symbols used in the late 60s *Invocation Of My Damon Brother* (featuring an obsessive Moog soundtrack by Mick Jaggar) and *Lucifer Rising* (1981, remade after his 1966 version was lost or stolen) are especially enlightening for non-initiates. These pieces are bookended by an introduction, "Force And Fire", which makes a convincing pitch for Anger's enigma of correspondences — how his montages effect the transformation of noise and image into magick ritual — and a filmography, annotated by Anger himself, which maps up the surviving fragments of lost or incomplete projects.

Since *Lucifer Rising*, Anger has been refining, needling and sometimes even rescuing his *Magick Lantern Cycle*, while occasionally presenting the work in person around the world. If cinema had ever been a career for Anger, such unproductivity would be alarming. Since he views his films as magikal tools to trigger his assaults on the sensuous, their undiminished power gives him no cause to invent new ones. □

## IN GRIOT TIME

BANNING EYRE

SERPENTS VAL PPK £10.99

BY PETER SHAPIRO

Submitted An American Griot in Mali, you would have every reason to presume that this musicalogical travesty is going to be yet another 'white man in Africa' tale. It begins that way too, with long-time World Music journalist Banning Eyre cataloguing his lack of privacy or a decent breakfast at his host's compound with a mixture of the blase machismo of a regular traveller of the developing world and the shock of someone who doesn't really comprehend just how privileged he is to be born in the West. Fortunately, this isn't just the whining of some guy who misses his full English breakfast, but the beginnings of perhaps the most honest account of life and culture in Africa that I have ever read.

Most books on Africa either wallow in shock tactics, laying out as no uncertain terms just how cheap and brutal life often is there, or they try to paper over the cracks with the kind of boosterism you'd expect in a smalltown newspaper. For his part Eyre engagingly chronicles the perilous life of Toukara, the lead guitarist of Bamako's legendary Raï Band and recent recipient of a Radi 3 award.

Toukara was Eyre's teacher and host for the duration of his stay in 1996. Eyre's pupil status gave him unprecedented access to both the 'real' life of African musicians and to the realities of African popular music. His vividly observed accounts record the inner workings of praise singing and the art of the *jeel* (griot), alongside wonderful details of spiritual life in Mali. 'People say that Islamic prayers are like perfume,' a Malian anthropologist tells him. 'God inhales them and wants to breathe in all he can get.'

of his living praising the elite in one of the ten poorest countries on earth, and the perilous position of a honky interloper who generally loves this music and wants to learn its secrets at the source. In the process he's unearthing of revealing both his own foibles and the bizarre complexities of a culture seemingly hellbent on destroying its most precious resources. What really makes *In Griot Time* special, though, is how he subjects a major African musician to the kind of treatment usually lavished on American and European recording stars. While it's ostensibly about Eyre's six-month tutelage in Malian guitar, it is equally an intense portrait of Toukara, the lead guitarist of Bamako's legendary Raï Band and recent recipient of a Radi 3 award.

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Traditional prayers are like shit, God takes one whilst and wants to deal with whatever is causing it immediately.' On a more biographical note, Toukara's friends reveal to Eyre that he was a slow child who scared other children as he dedicated himself totally to the guitar, practising for days on end without eating. While Eyre was there, Toukara had the chance to go to Cuba for a recording session, but it seems that he chose instead to sing for a ridiculous rich Malian benefactor who had recently returned from America. What really happened is never fully exposed. 'Nobody in Mali likes to tell you the truth because the truth leaves you vulnerable to your enemies,' World Music doyenne Lucy Duran explains to the author. 'Any fact about you – your real age or birth date, your mother's name, your exact weight – can be worked by the fleshists to protect themselves, nobody divulges real information.' Of course, in Africa it's next to impossible to turn down certain, immediate material rewards in exchange for possible future payoffs, but when you hear that he missed out on the Buena Vista Social Club sessions, your heart breaks.

Despite his fondness for both the music and his host, Eyre is acutely aware that he is always

involved in a transaction. As the one wanting to learn about the music, he might appear to be in the weaker bargaining position, yet he still holds all the cards. The major disappointment of *In Griot Time*, however, is that Eye is better on the socio-cultural interlocus than on the music itself. There are some nice passages when he admits that he prefers the music he is studying out of context – that is, when it's not being performed at a ceremony where the griots and musicians expect to be 'sponged' with cash by the people they're praising. Despite the anthropological incoherence of such a position, he can't escape the feeling that the whole thing's a bit of a scam. There's also a great description of Eye frantically trying to teach Toukara a 12-bar blues. Because it's so radically different from the Manding music he is used to, Toukara keeps getting lost in the structure. Too often, though, Eye resorts to phrases like 'she sings like an angel', which scarcely give any real sense of either the music or the beauty he finds in it. But as Eye himself says, after engineering a labyrinthine but peaceful resolution to a complex family matter, 'I let that I had learned more than Mending guitar songs in my time with the Toukara's.' □

## LATIN: 100 ESSENTIAL CDS – THE ROUGH GUIDE

SUE STEWARD

ROUGH GUIDES PPK £2.99

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

It couldn't have been an enviable task to contemplate choosing the 100 CDs which best represent Latin music in its many forms – a hydra-headed entity if ever there was one – and the lot (including albums with album credits and historical notes) into a tome scarcely larger than a pack of cigarettes.

By definition, the *Rough Guide's 100 Essential CDs* series is designed to both neophytes and aficionados. Obviously, they are designed to serve the former, being handily packed with shopping lists that can be carried around the local record megastore, the page layouts provide ready mnemonics for titles difficult to pronounce or recall. (The new *Rough Guide* should give these in charge of the Latin bins cause to celebrate, if only for spelling out *Maria Monte's* Verde, Arol,

Amaro, *Car De Rosa* & *Carvio* in plain type.) And most hardcore enthusiasts, once past the inevitable haranguing over titles deemed essential, will probably learn something new about a favourite album from the notes appended for each listing.

The series doesn't always live up to its billing – the 100 Essential World CDs might better have been classed 'introductory' – but, fortunately, the new Latin Rough Guide wears its best endorsement on its sleeve: the credit for author Sue Steward. The UK's premier salsa authority in the early 80s along with David Trope and Steve Breslow she co-founded *Coliseo*, a spiritual precursor to the magazine that you currently hold. Along among accounts of Latin music history, her *ejercitacion* (Thames & Hudson), manages to capture on panted page the fiery allure and the precarious mise-en-scène surrounding the evolution of merengue, mambos, Latin jazz and myriadous other forms that Latin music assumed during the 20th

century.

As such, it is fairly disappointing to learn that Steward, despite cover billing as sole author, only contributes 44 of the reviews contained here. In the book's foreword, she expresses gratitude to the contributing subgenre specialists, who helped winnow the also-ran titles from the thousands considered. The writing is of consistent quality, she chose her co-authors well (Jimmy Garcia's salsa insights are especially valuable). Still, reading Steward's own description of the rhythm section on Oscar D'Leon's *Los Oscantes De Oscar* ('great swoony violin melodies... a sensational, sensuous experimental') allows the best sort of vicarious experience. We hear the music anew through the ears of a True Believer, an eloquent one at that.

Classes are favoured, though not at the expense of recent developments. A number of Buena Vista Social Club veterans are spotlighted, fine for senior citizens and come-lately

romantics, but what of timba, Cuba's newest youth craze? Flip the page and there's David Calzado Y La Chavanga Habanera, torching a spiff and thumping the bourgeoisie. Should an iconoclast of Astor Piazzolla's magnitude be the sole ambassador? Not when *The Best Of Carlos Gardel* is brooding in the same book.

Steward notes happily that much has changed in Latin record shopping during the past two decades, with titles now widely available that once could be found only in barrio record stalls. Reading and re-reading *Latin: 100 Essential CDs*, this reviewer found himself wishing that a comparably well-considered book had existed in that earlier time, when *Manhattan's Times Square* subway stop concealed the best Latin record store of its day, the Aladdin's Cave of salsa. It is interesting and not a little heartbreaking to ponder the treasures that might have entered my life and their subsequent influence, were I carrying such a book in 1982. □

IN THEIR OWN WRITE:  
ADVENTURES IN THE MUSIC PRESS

PAUL GORMAN

SANCTUARY PPK £12.99

BY DON WATSON

If the best and worst criticism is autobiography, then the music press was always the most bipolar of media. The spates struck by an imaginative individual journalist interacting with a rapidly evolving culture find the best music critics. The worst was simply narcissism, provoked by boredom and the lack of anything interesting enough in the outside to get obsessed about. And we all got bored from time to time.

Structured as an oral history after the model of

editors Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain's absorbing punk chronicle *Please Kill Me*, Paul Gorman's *In Their Own Write* aims to be everybody's autobiography, telling the story of the music press from its evolution in the 1960s to its supposed decline in the late 80s. The notion that the music press is deceased is one I much bandied about by ex-music journalists, many of whom would trace the expiry of vital signs back to the date of their own departure. As Tony Parsons said to me when I arrived wide-eyed at the NME, 'it's a case of growing up and wanting to test the best times with you.'

No doubt the story is worth telling, but the one needs more of an authorial voice to make it work. All that Gorman has done is interview chunks of interviews with journalists from various

publications. It is almost impossible to read in a conventional way – you keep getting the feeling you are ploughing through raw material rather than being guided through a narrative by the editor's skilful editing and organisation. Yet skipping through it is confusing even for those familiar with the talking heads and/or what they're talking about. The chronology is sketchy – I remember Ray Hailstones writing superbly about David Bowie and Roxy Music in *Melody Maker* in the early 1970s, yet he is ascribed to a period when I was still reading *Dennis The Menace*. And the testimonies he has gathered are frequently one-sided. From his coverage of the early 80s, you get no clue that many people regarded this as a period of great excitement, when the music of Joy Division, A Certain Ratio,

Kerrif K, Cabaret Voltaire and Orange Juice was indissoluble from the writing of Paul Motley, Ian Penman and Chris Ihon.

That Gorman doesn't always properly credit or source the books' quotes reinforces the sense that he was ultimately defeated by the magnitude of the task of shaping the avalanche of oral material he had gathered. It would have been more illuminating if he had replaced his interviewees' unedited ramblings with some more concise pieces, properly embedded in their historical context and interspersed with a few well-chosen quotes. In this respect, Clinton Heylin's *Rebel Encyclopaedia Of Rock 'N' Roll Writing* is a much more successful, though not to mention more readable, chronicle of the music press. □

# On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

## MERZ NITE

LONDON VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM  
UK

BY PHILIP CLARK

As a piece of political theatre this event, inspired by the work of Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, could hardly have been more successful. Organised by Wire contributor Ben Watson, it aimed to take the best London's "free" improvisation scene has to offer out of dingy rooms at the top of pubs and into the V&A layer to "celebrate free museums, dead-voiced culture and unconstrained, spontaneous expression". The word "Merz" was wisely torn from a poster advertising Hanover's Kommerz und Punkt-Bank and the term became a "concept" or even a way of life, rather than a generic category. Schwitters applied it to all of his collages, poetry and sculptures, and the fact that this work looked against the status quo became more important than the medium. It symbolised something

snatched back from the institutionalised commercial world he so despised, and Watson claims that new "only free improvisation can rise to Merz's libertarian programme".

The evening began with the production of collage postcards by a large team of fellow travellers who snatched what unlikely meanings they could from magazines of various persuasions. They were assembled at a board and will eventually be exhibited in the new dome at the V&A. As they worked, bottles of lager were sold for £3 (no comment!) while someone in the foyer threw a scurvy overcast into the air, picked it up and looked quizzical before launching it above his head again. The atmosphere was punctuated by blasts from DJ Dakas Boner, meanwhile, a bedraggled figure bobbing on one crutch kicked an old pair of shoes around the floor. Anticipation grew as the musicians started to arrive. The plan was to have the audience walk around them, in so doing providing their own sonic landscape.

Unfortunately so many people turned up that there was no room to move, forcing the audience to sit like concrete statues. Rhode Davies looked on anxiously as spectators crowded the performance space, worrying that someone might knock his harp over. Fast up to the podium was trembontist Gail Brand. She needed to the burst of sampled sounds coming through large speakers with furious, plunger-lasted growls that sounded like Bubber Miley crossed with Miles Davis's well-known pedal. If Davies and bassist Simon Fell actually played anything to accompany her, I couldn't see or hear what. But they were definitely there.

Walking around the edges, I took advantage of a momentary gap in the crowd and elbowed my way into another concave. The excellent pianist Pat Thomas was at the back but I couldn't hear him. However, the extraordinary bassoon yelps of Mark Beck were difficult to miss. Beck uses the bottom of the instrument as a songboard for strained harmonics and he's built the

instrument into expressing his ideas. I tried to focus on his playing but was frustrated by the surrounding din. Other later musicians like saxophonist Caroline Krabbe and percussionist Chris Cutler either didn't show up, or more likely, I didn't manage to find them.

For a few minutes I did stumble across Lei Choi and Gai Band, weaving short strands of extraordinarily muscular counterpoint around one another. Musically the event was tripped up by the dazzling success of its sociopolitical agenda. I can't imagine any other Wire correspondent has ever complained that too many people turned up to a free improvisation gig. A more formalist approach would certainly have let the musicians communicate with one another in a more meaningful way, but perhaps that wasn't the point. Watson himself leaned out on the central podium at one point to read some poetry but was drowned out — a metaphor perhaps for the poet screaming against a society that won't or can't listen. □

## CANNIBAL OX + AESOP ROCK SAN FRANCISCO JUSTICE LEAGUE

BY JON WELDON

Conversation at a packed house suddenly ceases as Aesop Rock's wicked "Nickel-Plated Pockets", from his recent Daylight EP, booms from the speakers. It's a proper warm-up, showcasing the unashamedly cynical Hip-Hop collective known as Det Jux. The production from leader in absentia R-P. Hedges, while Cannibal Ox's Vast Aire plays a helpless, homeless beggar and Aesop, the embittered Mainstreamer, steals lines from Can Do's rap. It rambles with a post-paternal angst in the tradition of white NYC alienation, where "a city of 100 World Trade Center victim candle vigils" is merely another harsh urban detail.

The two of Vast Aire, Vordul Meglah and Aesop Rock (an amusing, unHip-Hop mouthful of eccentric names) saunter to the stage, disaffected B-boy stances, owing Hip-Hop attitude. Vast, a boyish punk, grimly holds an almost empty bottle of Maker's Mark whisky, sheepishly gazing behind a crooked baseball hat and an intense physical presence. Aesop creeps forward, looking wrinkled and shady in every sense, hood pulled over a crooked fat-mesh Pepto hat, one beady eye visible, the other

hidden in shadow. His beard is every bit as straggly and patchy as, say, Luke Vibert, whose stony bedroom experiments parallel Aesop's bestial blues fables in other ways as well. Vordul, marked simply by his clean, athletic presence, mimics his verses from "Stress Rap" span by Aesop Family DJ Sips One. This is their third Bay Area concert in six months, a stat suggesting that they're aiming towards a Roots-like live ethos, but it feels more like a capitalisation on newfound notoriety than anything resembling The Roots' dynamism.

Despite, or perhaps as a result of, their obvious inattention, they grab the mics running, relying on their vocal strength and EP's percussion to carry the performance, where stage theatrics are held to a minimum. They perform together, alternating between each other's tunes and switching each other on back-up vocals. Bouncing between new and old tunes, Aesop is the most energetic and eager, while Vast clearly enjoys his clever wordplay but too often hides behind his crooked hat. Shy and reserved, Vordul does his job, riding the beat with a straightforward intensity, much like the album.

The music remains mostly enthused in EPs' sweet, heavy, deejamous beats and rough, metallic textures, with occasional athenocentric horns and growling keys trudging along. While D-P's production threatens to overshadow the Cannibal

or MCs on Cold Win, it sounds great live, creating an intriguing, post-apocalyptic, vacuum-packed space in an accomodatingly tight Justice League. It commutes the mood, forcing the MCs to carry their weight or be lost under the pressure. A jagged, searing beat from "Raspberry Fields" almost loses the less adventurous, even as Vast ride it swiftly, smirking through lines like "Dh my god, said a word twice, Nas Aire, twice as nice". Sos One does sneak in 80s' uncharacteristically slow "Cental (Clock Click)" beat from The W album, which sits amazebly well, and the two handle it comfortably.

Aesop Rock dominates throughout, his crackly baritone vocal authority never faltering, his timing impeccable, and his urgency verging on the manic. On an unexpected freestyle he saves a floundering Vordul — Cannibal is too faded to respond spontaneously, energy — and concludes it with a verse so tight and clean you'd think it was from his album. Is it the contrast between looking like it just crowded him a Balokovo novel while executing Joycean ramblings with machine-like accuracy that make Aesop such a fascinating performer? If anything, though, it's his pace that's the most challenging.

Hammering home B-boy attitude during their most conversational moment, Aesop and Vast introduce "Boxbox" from Aesop's Labor Days with a discussion about their memories of

booboo boxes. You know, the ones that have a cassette still stuck in one of the slots, the ones that have broken "Play" buttons, the ones that, indeed, of that classic Wu-Tang era, were seen as Wu-Tang-influenced beginning — "Row, I'm a give it to ya, no, now, now like Aesop Rock's ren'ated 1st mixtape." He then pulls in the crowd with the "Boom, boom, boom" chorus. Even near the end, the crowd is entranced, held by a thread of eerie nostalgia.

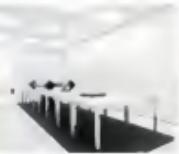
These new anti-heroes represent everything great about Hip-Hop: a refreshing innocence and an unpretentious style that's still aggressively dystopian. The teaming of Can Do and Aesop Rock — somewhat like Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in Lethal Weapon, Samuel Jackson and John Travolta in Pulp Fiction, even Jay-Z and Eminem in The Blueprint's stunner, "Renegades," but more like Mr Lord, Bigg Juss and DJ P in Company Flow — proves to be captivating, especially as an indie crowd. They offer a disengaged but Hotline that's both easy to grasp and difficult to hang on to, drawing on, while challenging, an urban tradition — nostalgic yet avant-garde. A definitive juxtaposition. □



# On Location



Left to right: Installations by Pannos Massal, CM Von Hassewell, Tennes Grossland & Petteri Niisanen, Ryōji Ikeda, and Carlson Niclara at Frankfurt's Frequencies (HZ)



## FREQUENCIES (HZ)

FRANKFURT SCHIRN  
KUNSTHALLE  
GERMANY

BY BEN BORTHWICK

**F**requencies (HZ), a rolling series of exhibited works and weekly electronic performances at Frankfurt's Schirn Gallery, is a welcome site towards the maturing of the "sound art" exhibition. Nevertheless, to some degree it remains stymied by being organised around a premise that is fundamentally elusive. This was underlined by the Schirn's director Max Hollein who, in his opening speech, emphasised the importance of continually seeking out new markets like sound art, inadmirably pointing to the entrenched formalism that is endemic throughout museum culture, not to mention the problematic economic model he was writing. Despite, despite the sound art label that will linger around any show like this, there is a unifying theme that reaches beyond formal characteristics. Reading across the curatorial, installation and excellent performance programme (see Out There), the theme of revealing that immediately discernible structure occurs in a number of different ways. On the most basic level, most of the exhibits have parallel identities as recording artists who are all

part of a larger electronic music network, sharing each other's work, collaborating on projects and/or releasing tracks on one another's labels.

The exhibition speaks a sense of walk-through rooms connected by an elongated corridor that creates a loop. Even though the walls are covered in white foam squares for noise reduction, there is plenty of spillage from one space to the next, turning the exhibition into a meta-sound environment, roughly divided into zones of low frequencies, high frequencies, and narrative. In the context of Carlson Niclara's minimalist physics sculpture, *Frozen Water* (2000), which shows the effects of low frequencies on water, or Torsten Grönland and Petteri Niisanen's *Ultrasonics* (1996), which reveals the fluctuating presence of radiation in the atmosphere, the white walls, floors and ceiling seem like some sort of future lab environment. Carl Michael Von Hassewell continues this quasi-scientific approach with *Parasitic Electronic Silence* (1997-2002), which picks into the museum's electrical current and presents it through a sound system and as an oscilloscope image projected on the wall. This piece seems to play the hermetic envelope of examining its medium of production, but it simultaneously speaks up the contradictory

trajectory of electricity's mystical tradition as a medium for making contact with the other side. Just as Niclara's installation sends reverberations throughout bodies and objects in the museum, Australian Hazel Pannos's installation locates the body as an auditory receptor. This minimalist image of body as ear is enacted in the cylindrical *Distance* (2002). A deep subwoofer tone permeates the entire body to the point that the vocal chords are subject to interference, making the voice sound like a crude digital voice simulation. The full extent of the sonic environment only hit me on leaving the chamber when my ears suddenly debrummed, leaving me feeling nauseous.

In an anarchic and liberal attempt to bring down the institutional editor, Max Barn's *Pi* (2002) is a large metal cylinder with oscillators that mimic the resonance of the architecture. Over a period of time there is potential for a kind of phagocytosis as the frequencies engulf, destabilise and ultimately destroy the architecture like white blood corpuscles attacking a virus. The anarchic nature of *Pi* means it has been installed outside in a small pavilion, just in case its suicidal impulse has its destructive potential and causes the host building to collapse.

The exhibition benefits from these pieces being

thrown into relief by works from Krzysztof Adam and Ultra-red, which deal with various problematic social and economic phenomena. Adam's *United* (2002) is an elliptical spoken word narrative enveloping a plaza of post-war architecture and Roman ruins as it meditates on the relationship between subjectivity, power and city space. Ultra-red's *Imperial Beach* (*Sistema De Voz* No 8) (2001-2) is a short video, projected into the lobby window, showing the heavily fortified American border with Mexico. Seen from the street outside the museum, the images are accompanied by the sounds of anti-globalisation protests in Quebec, thereby creating space in which these disparate geopolitical sites are linked. However, from inside the image is inverted, there are no soundtrack other than the ambient sounds of the lobby, a metaphor perhaps for Western governments' increasing isolation from voices of dissent within and beyond their borders. Throughout the exhibition Ultra-red have secured a series of commercial slots on local radio, and on 24 April they will collaborate with local activists on a performance. While the desired target of change is the macro socio-economic environment, the potential of these strategies for transforming institutions on the micro level of the art world should not be overlooked. □

## AFTER THE LOOP: POST-TECHNO AND THE LOGIC OF REPETITION

NEW YORK PS1  
USA

BY ELIZABETH VINCENTELLI

It's a testimony to New Yorkers' dedication – and, some might say, masochism – that a fair number of them braved a snowstorm to listen to five men, each one half-hidden behind an open laptop, babble on about topics such as "the fetishisation of the error". In conjunction with an exhibition titled *Loop*, P.S.1 Contemporary Arts Center organised a panel to cover "the relevance of the loop as a music-making strategy in contemporary 'Techno' music and the alternatives to the loop found in the 'post-Techno' aesthetic". As is often the case with these things, the event was more interesting for what it omitted than for what it discussed.

By meeting four men – Taylor Deupree, Jason Williams (aka Voccetote), Chris Saenger (aka Timelapse), and Todd Rynne, founder of the Carport label – all of whom make or champion variations on deep and chick Techno and Microhouse, the organisers and moderator, Wim contributor Philip Sherburne, unwittingly exemplified the increasing compartmentalisation and ossification of the electronic scene. There was no small amount of absurdity in the fact

that we were listening solely to people whose music has no discernible bass-shaking powers, as they ponderously talked about moving beyond the 4/4 beat and its "fascist" aspects, as Sherburne put it. That the organisers neglected to invite dance producers – coincidentally, House and Techno lumineuses Green Velvet and Fela Da Housecat were playing later the same night – was loooper than anything a laptop could belch.

Sherburne started by pointing out that "talking about the loop in electronic music is like talking about air in the outdoors". But what makes a loop work as such anyway? It soon became clear that repetition itself did not appear to be these musicians' real concern. Addressing the often-repeated accusation that electronic music is too easy to make, Saenger defensively replied that he studied classical composition, overlooking the fact that the accusation isn't usually made by academics looking for cultural validation, but by musicians in traditional pop groups. And as the real antagonists seemed to be not between loop and linearity but between modes of production and the creative process they engaged.

Sherburne quoted Morton Feldman as saying that "process itself might be called the zeitgeist of our age". Of course, he must have been investing on the importance of process for years,

but the panelists sounded as if they'd just had a lightbulb moment. Since the early 1970s, the women's movement has emphasised the importance of process over result – arguably leading to not-so-great art as a by-product of self-realisation. A direct consequence has been what home electronics is now going through: the mitigation of the mistake (or the glitch, in digital terms) into the music (or process).

Sherburne mentioned an article that argued that "failure has become a central conceit in all kinds of electronic music". But the panelists used "failure" and "experimentation" interchangeably. If we are to call it an unintended result that doesn't fit notions of what's acceptable in music, failure, by definition, is accidental, trying to harness it as process is antithetical to its essence. It was also somewhat ironic to hear men proue failure as a creative tool, when for years technical ability (and the lack thereof) has been used by male musicians to put down female ones.

Towards the end of a session that was getting increasingly bogged down in procedural chitchat, a woman in the audience remarked that loops are used in experimental video but that in order to avoid ending up with screensavers, many video makers avoid pure abstraction and incorporate irony and social commentary. Saenger pointed out that musicians don't have

that problem; unfortunately, many listeners might disagree, describing his music as an aural screensaver, or perhaps the music played on an elevator trip to the Seventh Circle of digital Hell. At that point, one could not help but think about *Carrousel*, an installat in PS1's *Loop* exhibit. A 1990 piece by German artist Carsten Höller, it consists of a carrousel tuned to move at a placid pace, with a note explaining that "in the end, the slowed down merry-go-round is just a ride that doesn't go anywhere". Well, a merry-go-round doesn't go anywhere, no matter how fast it is rotating. Is *Misnorhouse* going anywhere? And does it need to go somewhere to be artistically or – perhaps the thought – socially and politically relevant?

Jean Accosta, writing in *The New Yorker* about recent dance works by William Forsythe (who set one of his pieces to Gavin Bryars's *Ur-loop* piece *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*) and Pina Bausch, criticised them for relying too much on repetition. Pointing out that the choreographer's "indifference to the notion of development seems to me a reminiscence or intransigence", she suggested narrative as a creative way out. Could the process have been a red herring all along? That we were back to square one, thinking about something as old fashioned as repetition versus sequential progression, may have been the best loop of them all. □



## BRIGITTE FONTAINE LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

BY ROB YOUNG

Here she ever comes now, shuffling onto the Royal Festival Hall stage draped with a scarlet burkha, like a shambling pillar of blood. 30 years and then some since her debut album *Brigitte Fontaine Est...*, those three eminently dots are still to be properly filled in.

It's not entirely inappropriate, that the opportunity to wendle her compasses across Britain — should come as support act to Anglo-French Moëtë bouge burlesque group Stereolab. After all, the Lab's split single with Fontaine a few years ago was a small gesture at rehabilitating her reputation and rescuing her memory from being kumped together as just

another Gainsborough chankhouse. And the Lab's own aesthetic and reference points, at least in their early days, pointed towards the source of Fontaine's coming into being: the revolutionary ferment of late 60s Paris, and its peculiar configurations of protest and intransigence, myopic cocaine and bubblegum, Maréchal and Seulement, anarcho-theatre and impromptu street actions. Yet it has proved hard for Fontaine's art to translate, and even in France she is reportedly widely misunderstood. Three decades on, it seems the beach that lay just under the pavement has hardened into just another layer of concrete.

As her appearance in London shows, though, Fontaine has proved a hardy, durable survivor, undergoing something of a reinvention in the 90s. Once the burkha is thrown off, her

skinheaded and stock-thin frame is revealed. Yet there's nothing anorexic about her voice, as imaret, raw warl and jammer that transports the unheralded urgency of a Piaf to the barricades. Beginning promisingly with a modal number sung across a droning rock wail, reminiscent of Susanna Deyhim, she runs through a variety pack of past and present songs. That voice is served — not always to best advantage — by a group of what sound like highly competent but slightly heavy handed session musicians. She is, though, accompanied on percussions by her long standing musical partner Aneki, a solid yet not overrated presence on debouké and conga. Youthful numbers from *Comme A-La-Radio* are amplified phantasmagically through the voice's accumulated grit, and always concluding with a flourish, a tableau of one.

At times the vocal lizes to the point of

hysteric, a screaming and gabbling that takes her voice into the domain of sound poets such as François Guignol and Henri Chopin. Songs from her 2001 LP *Reverend*, which was recorded with a clutch of hand-picked collaborators including Sonic Youth, actually turn out to be some of the more memorable from this set. It also marks a move towards singing in English. "I am God's nightmare," she repeats tongue in cheek, almost as a talismanic chant against any suspicion of mellowing with age. Judging by the wry, smirky energy she displays tonight, Brigitte Fontaine plans to be troubling the Doctor's sleep patterns for many years to come.

Unveiled: Brigitte Fontaine's British debut at London's Royal Festival Hall

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# Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, [listings@thewire.co.uk](mailto:listings@thewire.co.uk)

Compiled by Phil England



Yo La Tengo at Only Connect; Cannibal Ox at ATP

## UK Festivals

### LOVEBYTES

#### SHEFFIELD

The annual festival which encourages artists to explore the creative potential of new technology has a host of new commissioned work as well as a music programme. The latter includes Japan's Yasuao Tone, Megi's Massimo, Robert Lipok, Sonaray, Freeform, plaudrontronics' switch from People Like Us, Techno from Baby Food and digital abstraction from Geesom. Commissions include Hansi Lahl's innovative environment of 550 glowing belts and tiny lights, a palinromic video by Steve Hawley, found audio-visual materials recontextualised by People Like Us, and Alex Povetkin's postulated patterns fused with electronic audio. Sheffield various venues, 14-16 March, festival pass £50/£65, 0114 221 0383, [www.lovebytes.co.uk](http://www.lovebytes.co.uk)

#### ONLY CONNECT

#### LONDON

The Illicium Centre's annual series of new collaborations and special projects. Marianne Faithfull performs songs from her new album *Kissin' Time* (10 March); John Zorn premieres *The Gift*, with a group that includes New York luminary Dave Douglas, Marc Ribot and Joey Baron (25); Bill's Damon Albarn appears alongside musicians he met and recorded with on a recent Damon-sponsored visit to Mali, including Ali Farka Touré, protégé Ali Fisso (26); Senegalese superstar Baaba Maal is joined with producer Howe B and Fourth World trumpeter Jon Hassell (5 April); Craig Armstrong performs songs from his first album with the London Sinfonietta and various guests (7 April); New Jersey's Yo La Tengo provide live soundtracks to the short films of French director Jean Painlevé (20); Iceland's Sigur Rós and Hirax

Örn Hilmarsson perform a new work based on a lost chapter from Norse legend the *Edda*, which features arrangements for orchestra and choir (21); and Mouse On Mars, Plaid and Cof perform new and old works to large projections of computer game graphics (27). London Barbican, times/prices vary, 020 7638 8881, [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

## International Festivals

### ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

#### USA

The rescheduled Some Youth-caused festival promises to be the event of the year. The dream line-up includes the Youth alongside Boredoms, Television, Cannibal Ox, Dead C, Tony Conrad, Jackie O Metherlender, Hue Man, Cecil Taylor, Peaches, Pita, Aphex Twin, Sleater-Kinney, Kevin Drumm, Leish Sieger, Stereolab and many others. Look out for the Wire stand, Los Angeles UCLA, 14-17 March, £100, [www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk](http://www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk)

### THE 12TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL WITH NO FANCY NAME

#### USA

Part two of Phil Niblock's annual experimental music festival at his loft performance space, otherwise known as the Experimental Intermedia Foundation, Guy De Beers performs 'Crossroads/Invocation' for live monophonic feedback (4 March); 'spk-->up' features a film screening and music courtesy of Jan Švankmajer (Anne Wilmers' 'Myopia') (6); Egon Fenzl's 'Un'Real' interactive installation allows the user to feel the post-ecological condition (8). Michael Notham presents live manipulations of carillon, chimney cleaner,

cactus, obidien and other sonic debris (9), and Nicolas Collins explores the future in 'Sted Dog' (11). New York Experimental Intermedia Foundation, 001 212 431 5127, [experimentalintermedia.org](http://experimentalintermedia.org)

### ARCHIPEL FESTIVAL

#### SWITZERLAND

Festival exploring the relationships between music and space and sound and vision, featuring artists working with sampling and music, concrete, installations and performance. Performers include Luc Ferrari, John Oswald, Christine Kubrich, Francesca López, Xavier Charles, Dominique Pergaud, Yoshinaka Taro, Ioua Muu, Martin Tereasa, Diane Labrosse, as well as music by Luciano Berio and Morton Feldman. Geneva Musique Contemporaine de Rainaldingen, 16-24 March, 00 41 22 329 2422, [www.archipel.org](http://www.archipel.org)

### DIN

#### IRELAND

Sound art exhibition which aims to be the most wide-ranging exposition of contemporary electronic music ever mounted in Ireland. Listeners can select sound works from 753 artists including John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, Karl Heim, François Bayle and DJ Spooky and listen on headphones or stereo speakers. Includes many exclusive and specially commissioned works as well as a showing of Catch 44, a video by John Cage. Dublin Arthouse, until 30 March, free, 00 353 1 605 6800, [www.arthouse.ie](http://www.arthouse.ie)

### HEINER GOEBELLS FESTIVAL

#### NETHERLANDS

Two day festival dedicated to the work of the music theatre composer featuring performances by Les Percussions de Strasbourg, extended vocalists David Moss, Blindman Saxophone Quartet, ASKO Ensemble, actor Ernst Stavro and Heiner Goebbels himself! The programme

includes Stadt Land Russ, ...wir sind so!, extracts from Sunsgate Cities, Hercules 2 and La Jalousie. Rotterdam Theater Lantaren/Venster, 22-23 March, 00 31 1 02 772266, [www.lantaren-venster.nl](http://www.lantaren-venster.nl)

### MARZRMUSIK

#### GERMANY

Major festival featuring Zeitvater's live premiere of Lou Reed's noise classic *Metal Machine Music* (see Special Events); a John Cage event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of 4'33" featuring performances, films and installations; a DVD installation of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's *The Well-Tuned Piano In The Megalyn Lights*; a performance of Stockhausen's *Michael's Youth* from his opera *Light*; Zeitvater and Shelley Hirsch perform Christian Marclay's *Graffiti Composition* conducted by Butch Morris; plus The Necks, James Neary, Steve Alton Johnson, Stephen Scott's *Music For Bowed Pianos* and more. Berlin various venues, 7-17 March, 00 49 30 254 890, [www.marzrmusik.de](http://www.marzrmusik.de)

### OBLIQUE LA NIGHTS

#### FRANCE

Toxic, noisy festival featuring Michael Gira, People Like Us, Jas Bermejo, Genesis P-Orridge, Bleaton From Bleachdom, Innen Schmetz & Kumo, John Dowdall, Jim 'Footes' Thirkwell & Jim Coleman, Eamonn Donnelly, Simon Fisher Turner, Fuckhead and others. Nantes La Jeté Unique, 22-23 March, [www.euphoric.com](http://www.euphoric.com)

### OTHER MINDS FESTIVAL

#### USA

Three days of concerts and artist forums. Featured artists include Lou Harrison, Pauline Oliveros, Ellen Fullman, Anne Lockwood and Richard Teitelbaum, San Francisco, various venues, times and prices, 7-9 March, 001 415 392 4400, [www.otherminds.org](http://www.otherminds.org)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



## CONTEMPORARY MUSIC NETWORK 2003/2004 SEASON

The Arts Council of England's Contemporary Music Network (CMN) Tour is devoted to presenting a year round programme of the most exciting and innovative music productions to diverse audiences across the country.

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For guidelines and an application form please go to the CMN web site [www.cmntours.org.uk](http://www.cmntours.org.uk) or contact us by letter 020 7772 6493 (e-mail [cmntours@arts council.org.uk](mailto:cmntours@arts council.org.uk) (post: CMN Tours, The Arts Council of England, 14 Great Peter St, London, SW1P 3HQ)

The Arts Council has an equal opportunities policy and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

The closing date for 2003/2004 applications is Tuesday 16th May 2002



# onlyconnect

a series of extraordinary live events

Friday 5 April

**Howie B / Jon Hassell / Baaba Maal** with John Bessley

Three disparate but exceptional musical talents are reunited for this unique event. They are joined by keyboardist John Bessley.

Saturday 20 April

**Yo La Tengo: The Sounds of Science**

Yo La Tengo compose and perform a live soundtrack to the sensual and eerie underwater short films of French surrealist Jean Painlevé.

Sunday 21 April

**Sigur Rós & Hilmar Órn Hilmarsson: Odin's Raven Magic**  
New music for choir and orchestra, inspired by the Nordic fable Edda.

Saturday 27 April

**Play: Mouse on Mars / Coil / Plaid**

World premiere of new music inspired by the computer game, performed simultaneously to large screen enhanced computer graphics.



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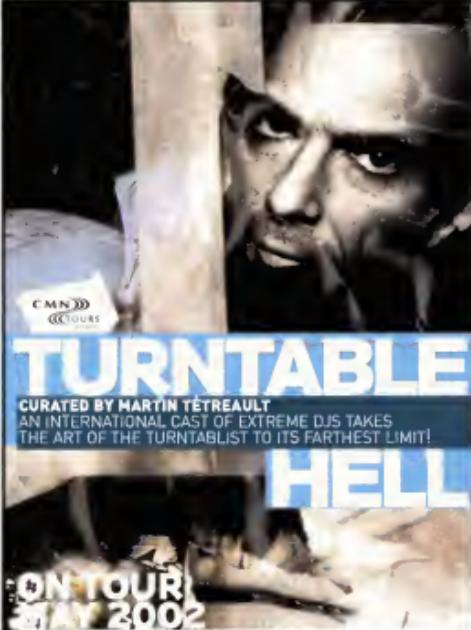
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- 16 **HULL** Adelphi Club 01482 216446
- 17 **MANCHESTER** Band on the Wall 0161 237 5554
- 19 **COLCHESTER** Arts Centre 01206 500900
- 20 **LONDON** Queen Elizabeth Hall 020 7960 4242
- 21 **READING** 21 South Street Arts Centre 0118 960 6060
- 22 **BRIGHTON** Concorde 2 01273 325440
- 23 **FAREHAM** Ashcroft Arts Centre 01329 310600
- 24 **EXETER** Phoenix 01392 667080



# Out There



Acid Mothers Temple in London

## TOON 3

### NETHERLANDS

Third edition of the Dutch festival for sound and image with electronics as new material! Exhibitions by Redundant Technology Initiative and the Raster-Nation group, and performances by Techno Animal, Ked606, Sigur, Porter Ricks, Fenixx, Jaga, David Shea, Palie Dahlstedt, and Oval (Branca (Bel)). Heerlen venous venus, 6-10 March, [www.toonfestival.nl](http://www.toonfestival.nl)

## Special Events

### CONCERT FOR AFGHANISTAN

#### UK

Cross-cultural fundraising bash for the relief agencies – Care International, Médecins Sans Frontières, Oxfam International and Save The Children UK – working in the country that has been devastated by 20 years of war. The concert is led by legendary Afghan musicians Ustad Mawhesh, Ustad Mohammad Aref and Ustad Mohammad Asif Mahmood, reunited for the first time after 15 years in exile. The bill also features Cheb Khalaf, Ensemble Kaboul, Johnny Marr and The Chol Foundation. London Royal Albert Hall, 14 March, 7.30pm, £30-£10, 020 7589 8212, [www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com)

### FILM INTO RETINA 2

Second programme of animation and experimental music feature soundtracks by Lynn Casselli, Walter Carlos and Ian Hellwells' quadraphonic electronics for his *Film Holes*. Brighton Cinematheque, 7 March, 8pm, £3.50/£3, 01273 384300

### LOU REED'S METAL MACHINE MUSIC

#### GERMANY, ITALY

The first ever live performances (sacred for amplified instruments) of Lou Reed's notorious noise classic, rendered by German New Music ensemble Zerkratzer (see *The Wire* 215). Reed will be in attendance for both performances. Berlin (Berliner Festspiele, 17 March); Venice (Teatro Moliron, 20), [www.zerkratzer.de](http://www.zerkratzer.de)

### TAKING A LIFE FOR A WALK

#### UK

A weekly series of half-hour performances by saxophonist Caroline Kraabel in which she will walk with her baby son through her inner London neighbourhood, playing improvised saxophone as she goes. The walks will also be broadcast live from 3 April onwards, when the London Musicians' Collective Resistance FM station goes

on-air and online. Local and times are necessarily ad hoc; see [www.lnr.org.uk](http://www.lnr.org.uk)

### ANDY WARHOL'S SILVER FACTORY + FILM SEASON

#### UK

To coincide with Tate Modern's Andy Warhol retrospective, Pots' Mark Webber has programmed an expanded cinema event at the show's double-screen classic *Chelsea Girls*, which features the Factory all-stars and music by The Velvet Underground. Other Warhol films and footage on show include *Viva!*, *Lulu* and *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, which shows the group rehearsing at the Factory, playing an extended improvisation, abruptly terminated by the New York Police Department. Filling the gaps between the films will be a roster of DJs including David Holmes, St Etienne's Bob Stanley and Pepe Wigas. The Mine's Edwin Pescay and Webber himself visual ambient from The Light Surgeons, plus special guest live performances and interventions. London Scala, 21 March, 8pm-2am, £8, 020 7887 8888. Webber also curates an extensive season of Werner's films at Tate Modern, which continues this month. Full details at [www.tate.org.uk/mediem](http://www.tate.org.uk/mediem)

### GARTH WILLIAMS MEMORIAL CONCERT

#### UK

To mark the recent sudden passing of the former *This Heat* member, a special concert including fellow *This Heat* members Charles Bulkin and Charles Hayward, and a host of friends, collaborators and peers including a reformulated Wire, David Cunningham, Paul Hood, Joya Arunagirinathan, Gurrin Sager & Voigt, Makai Patel, Mary Cullinan, Helen East, Nick Gossard, Dave Berme, Alex Gacastello, Simon Harris, Tony Marsh, Ian Hill, Viv Cormbridge and Peter Cusack, plus Andrew and Howard Jacques (from These Records), and Martin Harrison. London 93 Feet East, 7 March, 8pm, £12, 020 7247 3293, [www.93feeteast.co.uk](http://www.93feeteast.co.uk)

## On Stage

### A CERTAIN RATIO + RICHARD H KIRK

To celebrate the release of Soul Jazz's post-punk retrospective *In The Beginning There Was Rhythm*, and the same label's forthcoming *A Certain Ratio* anthology, Early, the Manchester

death disco combo play their first gig in five years, with Cabaret Voltaire's Richard Kirk doing his infernal radio-visual thing in support. Plus DJs Andy Weatherall, Playgroup's Trevor Jackson, Jerry Dammers and the Soul Jazz Sound System. London Ecteknows, 29 March, £10, 020 7494 2004

### ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE

Makoto Kawabata's unstoppable troupe of psychadelic troubadours keep on truckin'! Glasgow 13th Note (28 March, with Richard Youngs), Birmingham Medicine Bar (3 April, with The Heads), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (5 April) etc. [www.chunkycards.com](http://www.chunkycards.com)

### ASIAN OASIS FOUNDATION

After travelling to Havana, Cuba with the support of the British Council earlier this year, the imperious pop pedagogues perform two special shows. The first features an Adnan Sherwood live dub set featuring Ghetto Priest and the massed drummers of The Oba Foundation in support. London O2, 21 March, £12, 020 8533 0111, [www.ocean.org.uk](http://www.ocean.org.uk). The second is a live performance to Matthew Kassavetis's film about Persian youth culture and urban alienation. La Halle Brighton Dome Concert Hall, 23 March, £12, 01273 709 709, [www.brightondome.dome.co.uk](http://www.brightondome.dome.co.uk)

### DON BYRON

New York clarinetist tours with both a daytime programme (not just) for children, titled Bug Music For Juniors, and an evening programme,

We Are/B More Music For Six Musicians. Bug Music includes Byron's take on Duke Ellington, Raymond Scott and John Kirby, with the performances accompanying screenings of the vintage cartoons for which the music was originally scored. We Are/B deals with Byron's Afro-Caribbean heritage in New York's Bronx. Bristol Arnolfini (7 March), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (8-9), Birmingham MAC (10-11), London Barbican (12), Leeds The Wardrobe (13), Mansfield Leisure Centre (14), Brighton Com Exchange (15), Southampton Turner Sims Concert Hall (16)

### ANDREW CRONSHAW: ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE GREAT BEAR

A wild evocation of the ancient mists of the frozen North from Finland to Siberia, on a CWN tour sponsored by The Wine Newcastle, Playhouse (15), Odeon Thornbury, Reading Stables (8), Bracknell Town Hall Park Arts Centre (8), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (9), London

Green Elizabeth Hall (10), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (13), [www.cwntroupe.org.uk](http://www.cwntroupe.org.uk)

### NOR CUTLER

Limpid afternoons at the Lyric with the inimitable Scott. London Lyric Theatre, 3 & 10 March, 2.45pm, £16, 020 8741 2311, [www.lyric.co.uk](http://www.lyric.co.uk)

### FRIGGIE

Sub-zero space rock. Cork Triskel Arts Centre (28 February), Dublin Shelter at Vicar St (1 March, with Jimmy Behan), Belfast Ulster Hall Annex (3), Glasgow King Kits (4, with Capitol K), Manchester Roadhouse (5, with Capitol K), London Scala (6, with Capitol K and Manitoba), Bristol Louisiana (7, with Capitol K and Manitoba), etc. [www.brainwashed.com/fragde](http://www.brainwashed.com/fragde)

### GOODSPEED YOU BLACK EMPEROR!

Mantrills done rockers play UK dates as part of a European tour. Brighton Com Exchange Hall (16 March), London Ocean (18), Birmingham Que Club (20), Dublin Ambassador Theatre (22), Belfast Empire Theatre (23), Glasgow QMU (24), Bradford St George Hall (26), Newcastle University (27)

### GUTBUCKET

Punk-plus 'provisonisation' outfit showcasing their new *Kenting Factory* album. Insomniac's Dream, London Spex, 2 March, 7pm, £7, 020 7392 9032, [www.spex.co.uk](http://www.spex.co.uk)

### RICHARDO HELL

New York punk original reads from his new collection of writings, *Hot And Cold*. London upstairs at the Garage, 7 March, £5, 020 7607 1818

### ANNA HOMLER & SYLVIA HALLETT

LA teens' voice artist teams up with UN strings 'n' things improvisor on a short tour. London 12 Bar Club (24 March), Leeds Adelphi (28), Sheffield 78 Kingfield Road (29), Liverpool Bluecoat Concert Hall (30)

### INTERLACE

AMM pianist John Tilbury performs Cage's *Electronic Music For Piano*, along side free improvisations by Tom Chant, John Edwards & Eddie Prevost, John Ley, Manuhi, Li-Chuan Cheng, Deniz Dostbey & Sébastien Leterre. London Goldsmiths College Recital Room, 9 March, 7pm, 01932 566378

### INSTANT MUSIC MEETING: DIALOGUE 2

Perennial minimalist from the Tokyo quartet, movement Isakimara Nakamura (on no-input mixing desk) and Sadao N (sinewaves) are

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30 LEEDS Joseph Wells 0113 245 5570  
31 LONDON Mean Fiddler 020 7344 0044

June 01 BRIGHTON The Pavilion Theatre 01273 325 440

Tickets £10-£12 London / regional prices vary - check with box office (subject to booking fee)  
Book online at [www.artsdirect.com](http://www.artsdirect.com) / [www.ticketmaster.co.uk](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk) / [www.tickets-on-line.co.uk](http://www.tickets-on-line.co.uk)

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Royal Festival Hall  
Julian Elizabeth... in  
the Hall Room



## FORMER KRONOS QUARTET CELLIST JOAN JEANRENAUD METAMORPHOSIS

FRI 1 MAR 7.45PM QEII

'Superb and deeply moving'  
San Francisco Chronicle

One of the great cellists of our time, Joan Jeanrenaud tonight performs for cello, electronics and video. The night includes some of her own compositions as well as works by Philip Glass, Yoko Ono, Karen Tanaka, Steve Mackey and others.

## NORTHERN EXPOSURE FROM ANDREW CRONSHAW'S ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE GREAT BEAR

SUN 10 MAR 7.45PM QEII

'It's safe to say you'll hear nothing else like it all year' The Independent

Cronshaw has created an outstanding achievement marrying the traditions of Fiddle, Scottish Gaelic, North American and English music. Expect top folk performers from Hello! Latitude to performance artist/dancer Hegi Kala.



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Royal Festival Hall  
Julian Elizabeth... in  
the Hall Room

Sat 6 April  
Orishas  
+ La Corte

Sat 6 April  
Cachaito  
Lopez +  
Sergent  
Garcia

Sat 13 April  
Flaco Jiménez  
Special Guest:  
Maria Ochoa

Sat 27 April  
Gotan Project  
+ Nortec  
Collective

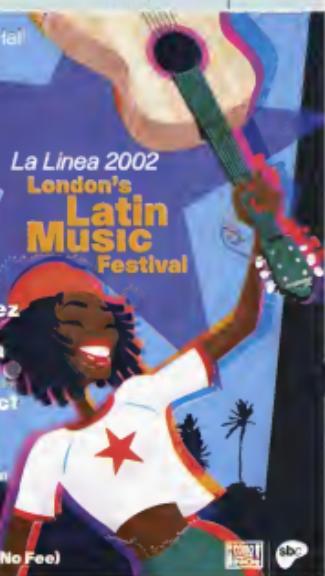
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march 2002

2. Gutekult €7  
14. Neurotic €6  
16. Sonic Boom DM€ conc  
19. Minutes €7.50  
20. Kank Pack & Taku Sakiyama DM€ conc  
27. Toshimaru Nakamura, Ami Yoshida,  
Uta Kawesaki & Sachiko M. DM€ conc

**april 2002**

12. Jaga Jazzist or Fallon Drunk  
Either act inc. Call for details

24. The Hub DM€ conc

**may 2002**

4. Basquatch €7.50  
sunday chillouts

**June 2002**

The Magic Los Angeles  
17. Jaga Jazzist & Fallon Drunk from the USA  
Free  
Details  
Date: 16. March, 7pm-11pm, 2002 in London  
Title:   
Every Friday Miles Davis, Damned  
Open in the Bar: Free  
Box office & info: 020 7437 0000

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**Gareth Williams Memorial Concert**

Andy Aronowitz/Nathan & Rick Wilson • Dave Bickler • David Bresnick • David Cusack • Simon Davis & Tony Marsh • Charles Busen • David Cunnigham • David East • Nick Goodall • Martin Harrison • Charles Hayward • Mark Jagger • Andrew Jackson • Howard Jacques • Mukul Patel • Gareth Sainsbury • Steve Vaire

93 Feet East, 150 Brick Lane, London E1.  
Thursday 7th March 2002 at 8.00pm £12.50



"My body moves forward in a restless mind  
runs back like a banner to the wind." —Gareth Williams

## The New Year Clint Conley & Consonant Chris Brokaw

Tuesday, 23 April 2002, 8pm  
The Borderline, Orange Yard (off Manette St.), London W1D

£7 advance, £8 at the door  
Tickets available from The Borderline, Stargate, Ticketweb

The New Year - 'Newness Ends' CD/LP available now on Touch & Go  
Clint Conley & Consonant - debut CD available 8 April, <http://www.tgrecords.com>  
Chris Brokaw - Red Cities CD available 5 June, <http://www.1200.net>

Friedl Habis Kassei (100 MIN)

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Cheesy Panto, Golden Years Of The Go-Go New Wave  
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**Utah Kawasaki**  
**Sachiko M**  
**Toshimaru Nakamura**  
**Ami Yoshida**  
includes Cosmos + Astro Twin

Wed 27 March 2002  
8pm £7.50

**The Spitz**

109 Commercial St, Spitalfields M12  
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info@the-spitz.com

**\_DIALOGUE 2**

109 Commercial St, Spitalfields M12  
London E1 box office: 020 7382 9032  
info@the-spitz.com

**Peaches**  
The White Spout  
Soles (104-54)

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**OBIQUE LU NIGHTS**  
22-23/03/2002

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NANTES, FRANCE

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JANIS ROSE + JEFFREY LEE PIGG + JAMES LEE  
IRMIN SCHMIDT + KUNO + ZIGGY FISHER TURNER  
ELECTRIC FROM BLECHDORF + STANTON DONNIE  
THEE MALES + THE BEEHIVE + THE BEEHIVE  
KOTAI + MIO + FUCHS + KUNO  
ELECTROPLASMA  
ENCRE + GREG WIECK + PORTAL  
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joined by fellow Tokyo avantarts Anna Yoshida (voice) and Utah Kawasaki (analogic synth) on their UK debuts. London Spitz, 27 March, 8pm, £7/£5, 020 7392 9032, [www.spitz.co.uk](http://www.spitz.co.uk)

#### KONK PACK

The red hot improvising trio of Tim Hodgkinson (reeds, electronics), Thomas Lehman (analogic synth) and Roger Turner (drums) tour London Spitz (20 March, with Tokyo's guitar anti-heros Taku Sugimoto), Colchester Arts Centre (21), Derby (23), Leeds Temple (24), Liverpool Art College (25).

#### KOPINSKI, KONIGIEWICZ & HARRIS

Excellent avant jazz led by ex-Pulse Zoo saxophonist, Leeds The Warrord (20 February, plus a phenomenal workshop at Leeds College of Jazz), Nottingham Buxton Hall (28), Standard Arts Centre (1 March), Bravby The Shed (2), Barnbury The Mill (5), Gainborough Trinity Arts Centre (6), Newcastle Corner House (7, plus afternoon workshop at Newcastle University).

#### FEMI KUTI & THE POSITIVE FORCE

Nigerian Afro-funk superstars keep his father's torch burning, London Oceans, 9 March, 020 7314 2800, [www.oceans.co.uk](http://www.oceans.co.uk)

#### LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA

All-star massed ensemble performing conducted improvisations and new extended compositions, London Red Rose Club, 3 March, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

#### VLADIMIR MILLER &

**THE BRICK LANE FILM ENSEMBLE**  
Miller and friends provide music to these short films from the Soviet era by Georgian director Mikheil Kobakhishvili. There's also poetry and music from the Milie Parsons Quartet and John Reay. London Shoreditch Circus, 31 March, 7pm, £7-£3.50, 020 7829 1001

#### NEOTROPIC

Heated Fourth World electronica, London Spitz, 14 March, 8pm, 020 7392 9032, [www.spitz.co.uk](http://www.spitz.co.uk)

#### NEW FLESH

Kino UK Hip-Hop crew, Cardiff Precinct (1 March), Bristol Thekla (2), Edinburgh Beat Jazz Basement (8), Sheffields Pa Na (9), Belfast Butcherwick (16), Brighton Ocean Room (22), Colchester Arts Centre (12 April), Dublin The Shelter (22 April)

#### NEW ITALIAN FUTURISTS

##### UK

Digital music performances by leading Italian newsmakers Fantaumagazine, Megi's Massimo, Alessandro 'Mugen' Casarini and ZELLE plus DJs, London 291 Gallery, 7 March, 7pm-10pm, £5/£4, 020 7265 9760, [www.zelle.org](http://www.zelle.org)

#### PEACHES + WHITE SPORT

Rough Trade Shops presents the Kith-Yo synth-sex-rocker plus live support, with sample-waver Soles in the DJ booth, London Great Eastern Hotel, 9 March, £10 (£8 advance), 020 7289 3385

#### PEOPLES UNDER THE STAIRS

The talented LA Hip-Hop duo continue this month, Cardiff Club Inlet (1 March, early show), Birmingham Qub Club (1 March, late show), Brighton Concourse (2), Exeter Timepiece (3), Bournemouth Casserole (4), Swarries University (5), Newcastle venue the (6), Leeds Warehouse (7), London Delafex (8), Edinburgh Scratch (9), Aberdeen Law (10), Glasgow Arts School (11), Derby venue the (12), Nottingham

Bomb (13), Belfast Queens University (14), Cork 5easy theatre (15), Dublin Peal (17)

#### OMARA PORTUONDO

Bueno Vista Social Club singer on a short tour, London Barbican Centre (12 March), Leicester De Montfort Hall (13), Cork Opera House (16), Dublin Gaiety Hall (17), Brighton Dome (18)

#### SAND

Yard's noisy post-industrial combo celebrate the recent release of *5558 Born Alive* (Sony Jazz), playing to new flares commissioned from award winning film directors, London Metro Cinema, 7 March, 8pm, £6, 020 7374 1506

#### SONIC BOOM

Pete Kimber's space rock titans, London Spitz, 16 March, 8pm/£6, 020 7392 9032, [www.spitz.co.uk](http://www.spitz.co.uk)

#### AKIO SUZUKI

Solo performance by the Japanese sound artist and Fluxus associate, utilising ancient stones and clay flutes, and his own invented *Analopas* instrument, London School of Oriental and African Studies, 27 February, 7pm, free, 07948 406 305

#### JAH WOBBLE'S DEEP SPACE

Low end World fusion heaven, Newham Arts Centre (22 February), Brixton The Square (8 March), Deaf Axon Arts Centre (29), [www.30herzrecords.com](http://www.30herzrecords.com)

## Club Spaces

#### ALT-FREQUENCIES: 6

Electronic music night hosted by Worm Interface in an underground former public toilet in East London, Icarus and confidante, plus Ola Rio-Co, Rektor, Django and Vito, London Public Unit, 7 March, 8pm, free, 020 7375 2425, [www.worminterface.com](http://www.worminterface.com)

#### AUDIT

Monthly night exploring new directions in electronic and improvised music. This month features a selection of microcosm including: acoustic improv from cello and trumpet duo Mark Westall & Matt Davis, digital music from the laptop of Argentinean Rahan Thomas, digital and concrete compositions from Tokyo's ex-pat Tomio Masa, and glitch abstraction from Nishi's Ben Drew. London The Cline, 17 March, 8pm, £5 includes free CD, 020 7734 9836

#### BAGGAGE RECLAIM

Open-arms mix of pop and experimentation, this month's session features a feature of *Gradual* (described as "slow-motion, de-focused chamber music") by Charles Hayward, Ashleigh Menin, John Edwards & Jacqueline Grant plus free in-premiere from Iuri Costin, Robin Mugrove & John Edwards, voice, toys, bicycle wheels, stricken instruments and invented language from the Bread & Shred duo of Anna Homer and Syka Homer, and lo-fi/loop improvers Mattin and Rossy Purple in a trio with AMM's Eddie Prévost, and songs with accordion and electronics from MC Richard Sanderson. London 12 Bar, 24 March, 8pm, £5, 020 7916 6898, [www.bagget.com](http://www.bagget.com)

#### BREAKING BREAD

Horror monthly with guest DJs Roc One, Chris Head and Zilla, guest MC Mad Flava, guest breakdance crews Energy Squad from Hungary and Force 10 from East Anglia and resident DJs, London Jax, 9 March, 9pm-4am, £7-£3, 07875 547 008, [www.breakingbread.com](http://www.breakingbread.com)

#### GRIMES OF THE FUTURE

A night of arcane electronic music on disc, from Bomb (13), Belfast Queens University (14), Cork 5easy theatre (15), Dublin Peal (17)

Pete Schaefer and John Cage to Eno and Nurse With Wound. Cardiff Club Inlet (18), 11 March, 10pm-2am, £3, 02920 232199

#### EAT YOUR OWN EARS

Two events this month. The first is co-presented by Bella Union Records and Features Department Lounge Live, plus a special DJ set from Kid Loco (6 March). The second is co-presented by the Ktinyo label and features live performances by Peaches, Taylor Swift, Louis Tomlinson, Maximilian Hecker and Trish Money (aka Sneaker Pimps) plus DJs Arthur Baker, Erol & Roy, Kityo & DJs and special guests (8) London 93 Feet East, 8 March, 8pm-2am, £10/£8, 020 7247 3293, [www.93feeteast.co.uk](http://www.93feeteast.co.uk)

#### EXTRA

Slack sound, relaxed space, intense audio mutation. Expect digitalia, collage, soundscaping and leftfield electronics on decks and effects plus images by IAMX and Flash, works by Berliner Jay Rosenzweig, London The Foundry (10 March), 3pm, free, 020 7739 6900, [www.soundsound.net](http://www.soundsound.net)

#### FREE RADICALS

Regular free improvisation meeting. This month: London Bass, also featuring Tony Wren, Mando Matus & Simon Firth plus Mick Beck on bassoon, London Red Rose Club, 6 March, 8pm-11pm, £5, 020 7263 7265

#### KOSMISCHE

Mindzur and Juniper appear live with Krautrock and more from DJs Philips Philippe, Jimi Bachor and Mink Peacock, London Upstair at the Garage, 30 March, 8pm-3am, £6/£5, 020 7607 1818, [www.kosmische.org](http://www.kosmische.org)

#### KLINKER

Improv and off-the-wall wacky. This month features: Purridge and Metcalfe's Monotonous Megastars (7 March); Dave Bryant, Erez Rocco, Carla Azar, Richard Kijewski, Anuramit Bhattacharya, Belafatla, Max Wyman & Althea Gouweva (14); Chris Farwell & Ernesto Diaz-Infante; Daniel Weaver, Anna Homier with Adnan Nordhov & Dave Tucker, Snake Hips At The Holloway House, Will Evans, Mike Johns, David Leedy and Hugh Metcalfe (21); Fats The Cat & His Cyberians, Den Knight with Starbabs Philippe, MVO, Ute Völker, Stéphan Heli, Arghand Davies & Hugh Metcalfe (28); and Maxi Westell, Tom Chant & Paul Hook, Bloody and The Dukes Of Pouch (29). London The Stag, Brixton, £4/£3, 020 8806 8216, [www.klinker.co.uk](http://www.klinker.co.uk)

#### OPEN SOUL SURGERY

Hi-Hop, funk and future House from Adam Child and visiting consultants. London Living, 17 March, 8pm, free, 0207 326 4640

#### PLAY

Japanese UK label PLAY celebrate the release of a new compilation, Paper, and the start of a monthly fusion disc night, London Market Place, 13 March and second Wednesday of every month, 8pm-1am, free, 020 7079 2020

#### SOUND 323

Afternoon improvised music performances in the basement of this classy North London independent record shop. Keith Thompson & Dave Pullen (9 March), Daniel Weiser on cello and electronics (23), Ute Völker & Michael Davies (26), London Sound 323, 3pm, £3, 020 8348 9595

#### THE SPRAWL

Obstinate soundscapes and edgy sounds. This month features US-based installation and sound artists, J Frede, Marcus Leadley, inres

**London Musicians' Collective**  
regular press note service 2002

**LMC**  
KONO PARK +  
TAICO SHIMODA  
[20 March 2003]  
Live at The Spitz,  
109 Commercial  
Street, London E1 on  
Wednesday March  
26th 2003 at 8pm  
The usually out-there  
all-star improv line up of  
Thomas Lahn, Tim  
Hodgkinson & Roger  
Turner plus the master  
of limbic, more-is-less  
guitar & shining light of  
the "Japanorama" tour

**RONINNIA VOL. 92**  
**THE FEEDBACK ISSUE**

[March 2003]  
Magpie & CD by  
Kozu Akenman  
Nicola Collins  
Phil Daniels  
Rob Flatt  
Alain Lander  
David Lee Myers  
Toshimaru Nakamura  
Barry Nichols  
Michael Price  
Hao, Ropily  
David John Cage  
Xentax

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[April 2002]

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2002musicfoof

# Out There

and David Brady plus resident DJs Douglas Benford and Be Tame; and visuals by Waveform, London Global DJs, 14 March, 7:30pm-midnight, £4/E3, 020 7287 2242, [www.ctuse.co.uk/sprew/](http://www.ctuse.co.uk/sprew/)

## STRANGE THINGS ARE AFOOT

Billy Childish performs his twisted and visceral garage blues, plus alternative rockers Montauk Pete, broken songs from Crayola, songs from Gaudi, and acoustic songs from Carolyn Mason. London 12 Dec, 10 March, 7:30pm, £8/E4, 020 7916 6651

## SWIM BEFORE

This month's name for The Bohemian Brothers' regular Improv/experimental space, Rest and Dose. Ryan John Edmark & Mark Sancious (ie (4 March); Sarah Telesh & friends, Diane Fowler, Susie Hesseyman, Gill Walschap & Julia Doyle quartet; and Sami Murphy solo (11). The London Toy Orchestra and The Bohemian Brothers with Ian McLachlan (18); Ute Völker & Mark Westall duo, Adrien Northover, Anna Horner & John Edwards trio (25). London upstairs at the Bannister Centre, Brixton, £4/E3, 01932 571323

## XEN: SOLID STEEL

The Ninja Tuna folk premiere birthday cake all round at the first anniversary of their monthly club. DJ sets from Amien Tobe, Boroboré, Wiggy Christ (aka Luke Vibert) and Finn London Cargi, 28 March, 8pm-1am, £7, 020 7739 3440, [www.abconcrete.be](http://www.abconcrete.be)

## ETHER

UK Five night event which attempts to increase the profile of various strains of new-wave, underground electronic music by presenting them in a concert hall environment. Performers include a quartet of Kim Gordon, Jim O'Rourke, Blue Men & Ol' Olive, Pan Sonic meet Chicks On Speed, Jeff Mills (performing a live score to Fritz Lang's *Métropolis*), Robbie Hawtin, Radiebox, Super\_Collider, People Like Us, Felix Kubin, Matt Ward, Comeless, Ladytron, Gutar and Nortec Collective. London Royal Festival Hall, 26 April-6 May, [www.ether.uk.com](http://www.ether.uk.com)

## Incoming

### ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

#### UK

Curated by Steve Albini and featuring his current group Sheiac, plus the Fall, Metz, Soraia,

Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Wire, Low, Cheap Trick, Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Do Make Say Think, Zer0 Gava, The Breeders, Röyksopp and others. Carter Burden Halley Centre, 19-21 and 26-28 April, £100, [www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk](http://www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk)

## BIOS 02: PRESS PLAY!

GREECE Event that combines computer and video game culture with hard-edged electronica. Performers include Adult, Chicks On Speed, Pan Sonic, Funktionsteufel, Feneesz, SND, Plaid and LFO, plus DJ sets by Palungen and John Peel. Athens IWE, 12-28 April, [www.wd@iweb.com](http://www.wd@iweb.com)

## DOMINO FESTIVAL

#### BELGIUM

Annual festival this year featuring Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Do Make Say Think, Le Tigre, DAF, Polysics, Lambchop, Connell Dr. and Mike Ladd live, as well as DJ sets, label showcases, screenings and an exhibition of sleeve art taken from The Wire's 2001 Invisible London expo. Brussels Antwerp Bruxelles, 10-21 April, [www.abconcrete.be](http://www.abconcrete.be)

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## FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL MUSIQUE ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE

#### CANADA

19th edition of this excellent avant-music festival. Highlights include a new Keith Tippett composition for orchestra, a new collaboration between Mewmew and Pan Sonic, and a ave of Ceci Taylor, Bill Dauw and Terry Riley. Victoriaville, 16-20 May, 001 819 752 7912, [info@fimact.ca](mailto:info@fimact.ca)

## FREEDOM OF THE CITY

#### UK

Second annual festival celebrating London's bustling improvised music scene. The line-up includes London Improvisers Orchestra, John Tilbury plays Samuel Beckett, Maggie Nicols, Nuts in May, Roger Smee, Bonyuk, Louis Motola, Phil Minton & Roger Turner, Trevor Watts & Vernon Weston, Sylvia Halliday, Evan Parker & John Russell, Charlotte Haze & Phil Thomas, Lal Cossell, Antes Lukoszewiec & Eddie Pridgett, Rassange and the Tam Chant and Ci Food trio, London Conway Hall, 3-11 May, [www.methinksrecordings.com](http://www.methinksrecordings.com)

## LE WEEKEND

#### UK

US free jazz and Japanese avant rock dominate this event curated by Wire contributor David Keenan. The line-up includes Shukaku, David S Ware Quartet, William Parker (in conversation, with a duo with Hamid Drake, and with his quartet), Maher Shalal Hash Baz, and Ken Hano (solo and with Fushishita). Stirling Tolbooth, 25-28 April, £39/£32 festival pass, £12/£8 day ticket, [www.stirling.gov.uk/tolbooth](http://www.stirling.gov.uk/tolbooth)

## TAKTLOS 02

#### SWITZERLAND

Excellent, idiosyncratic Alpine event this year featuring Ex Øreszt (The Ex with Jaap Blonk, May 2002)

# UK Radio

## NATION

### BBC RADIO 1 97-99 FM

#### JOHN PEEL

Weekdays 10pm-midnight, [www.bbc.co.uk/peel](http://www.bbc.co.uk/peel)

#### GILLIS PETERSON

Wednesday mid-morning-2am, Fresh And New, [www.bbc.co.uk/peterson](http://www.bbc.co.uk/peterson)

#### FABIO & GROOVERIDER

Friday 2-4am, [www.bbc.co.uk/fabio](http://www.bbc.co.uk/fabio)

#### WESTWOOD RAP SHOW

Friday 11pm-2am, Sunday 8pm-midnight, [www.bbc.co.uk/westwood](http://www.bbc.co.uk/westwood)

#### REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday mid-morning-2am, Bass culture, [www.bbc.co.uk/bassculture](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bassculture)

#### BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

#### LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursday 10:15-11midnight, New Music curators, [www.bbc.co.uk/latejunction](http://www.bbc.co.uk/latejunction)

#### JAZZ LEGENDS

Friday 4-6pm, Archive recordings, [www.bbc.co.uk/jazzlegends](http://www.bbc.co.uk/jazzlegends)

#### ANONY KERSHAW

Friday 10:15-11:30pm, World Music, [www.bbc.co.uk/anders](http://www.bbc.co.uk/anders)

#### JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11:30pm-1am, [www.bbc.co.uk/jazzon3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/jazzon3)

Modern jazz in session and concert

## WILD KNOBES

Wednesday 8pm, [www.wildknobes.com](http://www.wildknobes.com), Curated by the founders of global music

## JAZZ FILE

Saturday 8-10pm, [www.bbc.co.uk/jazzfile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/jazzfile)

## HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 10:30pm-1am, New Music magazine, [www.bbc.co.uk/hearandnow](http://www.bbc.co.uk/hearandnow)

## MIXING IT

Sunday 11pm-midnight, [www.bbc.co.uk/mixingit](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mixingit)

Hyper-edited mix of avant sounds

## Regional

### BBC LANCASHIRE

95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 955 MW

#### ON THE WIRE

Saturday 8-10pm, Love Water mixes it up while

### BBC MERSEYSIDE

95.8 FM, F485 MW

#### PMS

Sunday midnight-2am, Eclectic mix of avant sounds

### BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM

#### FROM BEBOP TO HIPHOP

Wednesday 7:30-9pm, Sunday 10:30pm-midnight, Jazz and nu-beats

### CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM

#### (MILTON KEYNES)

#### THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight, Eclectic avant mix

### KISS 100 FM (LONDON)

#### PATRICK FORGE

Sunday 10pm-midnight, Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

#### FROST AND HYPE

Sunday 3-5am, Jungle

Wouter Weerbos, Michael J Moore, Michael Volker and others, Spank, Inius Selska & Jean Deomone, Shabab Electr Quartet, Orchestra 33 1/3, Janine Mukamuya and more, Bassist Gene da Nost, 18-20 April, and Zurich Kulturbrauerei Rot Fabrik, 19-21 April, [www.talktix.com](http://www.talktix.com)

## TAMPERE BIENNALE

#### FINLAND

New Finnish, electronic and vocal music presented in a series of 18 concerts Tampere various venues, 10-14 April, [www.tampere.biennale.com](http://www.tampere.biennale.com)

## TURNTABLE HELL

#### QUEBEC

Quebec's hottest DJ Matt Tétreault leads an ensemble of extreme DJs, including Otomo Yoshihide, Jenek Schaefer, Steve Noble, Paul Hard and Lepke B, in a new composition. A CMN tour supported by The Wire. Stirling Tolbooth (14 May), Newcastle Arts Centre (15), Hull Adelphi (16), Manchester Club On The Wall (17), Colchester Arts Centre (18), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (20), Reading 21 South Steet Arts Centre (21), Brighton Concorde (22), Farnham Ashtead Arts Centre (23), Exeter Phoenix (24). Info: [www.cmnbands.org.uk](http://www.cmnbands.org.uk)

Get These Items for Inclusion in the April Issue should reach us by Friday 8 March.

Fix +44 (0)20 7422 5011, [edit@thewire.co.uk](mailto:edit@thewire.co.uk)

Do not send email listings as attachments. All listings information should include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings cannot be taken over the phone. □

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## MATT JAMES BONNET

Wednesday 2-4am, More jungle, sci-fi, science

## LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM

#### SOLID STEEL

Monday midnight-2am

Mad mixing from the Ninja Tune mob

#### CHARLIE GILLETT

Saturday 8-10pm, World Music, roots and R&B

#### RANKIN' MISS P: RHOOMS & BLUES

Sunday 10pm-midnight, Soothing roots

## XFM 104.9 (LONDON)

#### FLO-MOTION

Sunday 9pm-midnight, Leftfield electronics

SOFTWARE //

**bios 02**  
PRESS PLAY!  
THE 2002 BIAS MUSIQUE BIOGRAPHY

**PONG**  
**ASTEROIDS**  
**SPACE INVADERS**  
**ARKANOID**  
**PACMAN**  
**TETRIS**  
**DOUBLE DRAGON**  
**PACMAN 3D**  
**TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT**  
**GRANTOURISMO 3**

HARDWARE //

**SONY PLAYSTATION 2**  
**MICROSOFT XBOX**  
**NINTENDO GAMEBOY ADVANCE**  
**ZX SPECTRUM, 48K**  
**COMMODORE 64**  
**1977 XMAS ATARI VCS**

AUDIO //

**VLADISLAV DELAY**  
**PAN SONIC**  
**FURUKAWA**  
**FENNESZ**  
**ADULT**  
**PREFUSE 73**  
**POPTRAUME**  
**CHICKS ON SPEED**  
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## **freedom of the city 2002**

- a festival of radical improvised music -

### **FRIDAY EVENING (May 3rd 19:00)**

#### PROCESSION 1:

Anthony Guerra (electric guitar), Roberto Filizola (piano), Sandy Kindness (bass saxophone & bass clarinet), Sue Lynch (tenor saxophone), Romuald Wadych (bass guitar/electronics)  
**MATT DAVIS** (trumpet) & **MARC WASTELL** (cello)  
**MAGGIE NICOLLS** 'NUTS IN MAY' fresh from *The Gathering*: freely improvised music, plus 'Collage' pieces by John Steeves selected and arranged by Maggie Nichols (personnel to be announced)

### **SATURDAY AFTERNOON (May 4th 15:00)**

**CHRIS BURN** (trumpet) & **MATTHEW HUTCHINSON** (synthesizers/keyboards)

**ROGER SMITH** (solo guitar)

**BIRDYAKI**: Bob Cobbing (voice), Lai Covelli (soprano saxophone), Hugh Metcalfe (guitar), Jennifer Yarde (movement)

**LOUIS HOHOLO GROUP**: Francine Luca (voice), Jason Yarde (alto saxophone), Verlyn Weston (piano), John Edwards (double bass), Louis Hoholo (percussion)

### **SATURDAY EVENING (May 4th 19:30)**

**PHIL MINTON** (voice) & **ROGER TURNER** (percussion)

**TREVOR WATTS** (soprano & alto saxophones) & **VERYN WESTON** (piano)

**SYLVIA HALLETT** (violin, voice, bicycle wheel, sengpi, saw, etc)

**EVAN PARKER** (soprano saxophone) & **JOHN RUSSELL** (guitar)

### **SUNDAY AFTERNOON (May 5th 15:00)**

RESPONSE: Knut Auermann, Anselm Caminada, Birte Melsted & Sarah Washington (electronics)

**CHARLOTTE HUG** (viola/electronics) & **PAT THOMAS** (keyboards/electronics)

**PJM**: Adam Bohman (amplified objects), Jacques Fousha (clarinets), Robert Jarvis (trombone)

**LDL COXHILL** (soprano saxophone), **PAUL RUTHERFORD** (trombone) & **JAN SMITH** (trumpet)

### **SUNDAY EVENING (May 5th 19:30)**

LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA performing free improvisations and pieces directed by Steve Beresford (featuring Paul Rutherford), Terry Day, Simon H Fell, Caroline Kratzel, Paul Rutherford & Dave Tucker as well as a piece by John Steeves (personnel to be announced)

### **MONDAY AFTERNOON (May 6th 13:00)**

**ANTON LUKOSZIEVICZ** (cello) & **EOGIG PREVOST** (percussion)

PROCESSION 2: **Tim Blackwell** (tenor saxophone), **Denis Dubeau** (soprano saxophone), **Tim Goldie** (percussion), **Ross Lambert** (electric guitar), **Hatin** (laptop/samples), **Michael Rogers** (bass guitar), **Tom Chant** (soprano saxophone), **PATRICK CARPENTER** (harmatiles) & **IVAN SEAL** (computer)

### **MONDAY EVENING (May 6th 19:30)**

**JOHN TILBURY** (piano)

a. 'There's Something in There' solo piano text by Ken Edwards  
b. 'Cascades' text by Samuel Beckett

**HARIANTHI PAPALEXANDRIS PROJECT**: Three improvisatory visual, sound and performance pieces: with **Sebastien Lefevre**, **Ed Nelson**, **Yue-By Hu** and **Harianthi Papalexandris**

**NATHANIEL CATCHROLE** (tenor saxophone), **JAMIE COLEMAN** (trumpet), **JOHN EDWARDS** (double bass) & **EDDIE PREVOST** (drums)

for details visit

[www.bbc.co.uk/radio3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3)

[www.matchlessrecordings.com](http://www.matchlessrecordings.com)

[www.emanemdisc.com](http://www.emanemdisc.com)



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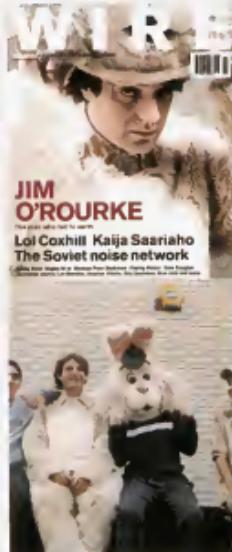
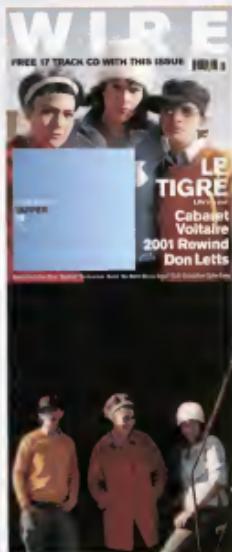
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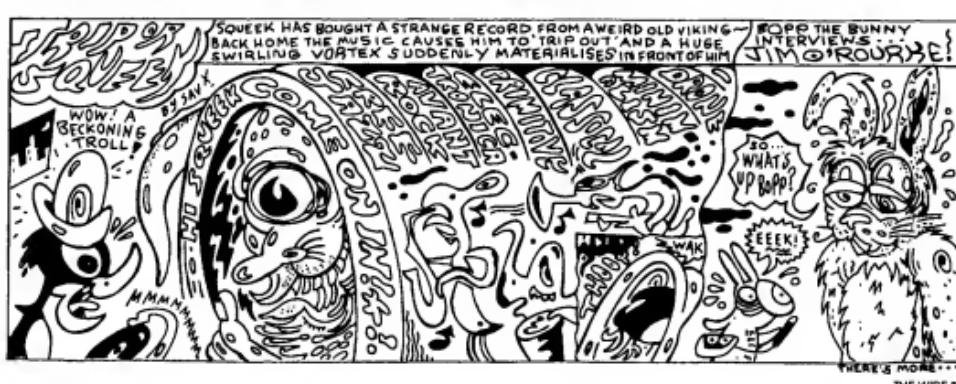
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To provide the finest in original funk, jazz, disco, Latin and Afro-beat, and to document some of the key areas of dance music history. To bring you the long buried nuggets and hidden gems which pepper the illustrious history of soulful music. To rediscover and honour some of the neglected artists who have dedicated their talents to the advancement of the Funk.

### Other activities

Stevi launched the first ever exhibition about Larry Levan and the Paradise Garage in London 2000. In the same year, we were the first label to bring legendary New York DJ Danny Krivit over to London. We made a documentary film, included in the

*Nigene 70 album*, featuring exclusive interviews with many of the key figures in Lagos in the 70s, from King Sunny Ade and Ebenezer Obey to Ginger Baker (Cream), Roy Ayers, Fela and Peeli Kuti. One-off Strut parties such as Grand Master Flash's first London appearance in more than ten years; Paradise Garage party with David Delphine, one of the original 70s Paradise Garage DJs. Strut has its own team of DJs, who promote the label worldwide.

### Future Plans

Grand Master Flash tour (April); One-off DJ Europe tour (May-June); Nigeria 70 Allstars UK Tour (November); CDS out in March and April; Segun Eubank: Revolution; *Disco Not Disco 2*, with Laid Back, Eddie Grant, Carib Lovers, Yello and Arthur Russell; *Oceans Of JAH: African Rhythms and Soca Jungle*; Peter King: *Shango*.

### Choice Cuts

Various: *Algeria 70*; Various: *Disco Not Disco*

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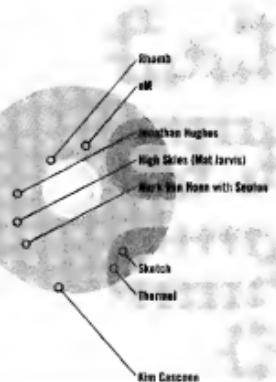
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# Epiphanies

When Louise Gray was in a black hole, Marc Almond's torch songs showed her the light



Bleeding heart: Marc Almond

The evening couldn't have had less auspicious beginnings. Driving down from an early Christmas party in North London, there was a sudden flurry of traffic. A gawping crowd were gathering. Two cars had careered across the road; one was on an angle up on the pavement. A motorcycle lay between the two. Someone – a witness? – was screaming, a long silent howl that I visualised rather than heard, although there was no mistaking its tenor. Another was laying a coat over something in the road. A few yards off, linked only to this shape by a slew of viscous darkness – it's Nick Cave's line about "a warm arterial spray" that incongruously springs to mind now – was a head. The blood shone purple, reflecting a neon shop sign. I remember. There were blue lights approaching. The police, the medics, the fire tenders. An officer waved me by.

To be brutal, I was already numb. In a freefall anchored only by the small cubes – a large end-of-year pile of newswires I was writing for the NME I had been that way for the past week. It was 1987; I was 30, more gauche than I care to admit. To a long relationship had ended abruptly and cruelly. The culprit had legged it to New York from where he amed himself by leaving death threats on my answering machine. I'd lost something like a stone in days. Colleagues perhaps sensed that work could provide a pointillist frame to help restructure my life, day by day, album by album, although one did question whether it really was a good idea – given Marc Almond's perennial theme of love lost – that I review the singer's gig that weekend at London's Astoria Theatre.

It was an odd one for me to insist on. Much of 1986 and 1987 were spent in pursuit of the new dance records coming out of Chicago and Detroit. It was the glistening, well-aimed instrumentals – Laurent X and Derrick May, especially – that really got me. Here were tracks that said more without words than any song. They were dark, interior soundtracks that allowed the listener their own sonic space. I had been impressed by Marc Almond's recent solo work – *Stories Of Johnny*, *Mother Fst* – and I'd liked the older Soft Cell stuff well enough, but I was edging towards a position where the song, that old format, was past its sell-by

date. Words, yelping and moaning their way through little verses, were expediting their distance between representation and meaning. The events of that December only accelerated the process in me. When the boxed set of Philip Glass's ancient Egyptian opera, *Akhnaten*, was released – just a week before Almond's gig – I was drawn immediately to the work's final act, where the ghostly Pharaonic family shed language in favour of melismatic lines flavoured with a chilling pognance. Here's a place where language fails, where its insufficiency to express the dense blackness inside of one is laid bare. I knew it. I was there.

I hadn't seen Almond perform before and I can't remember my first glimpse of him. I was aware that, on the first songs, the voice could crack or wobble, and I wondered what he was straining towards. Bobbing my head (the venue had sold out weeks in advance) to get a view of the stage, I could see him now: a small, skinny guy, tanned in his delivery. And then something changed. The idiosyncratic modulations no longer mattered. There, in front of me was nothing less than a transformation. Was it during Almond's cover of Jacques Brel's "If You Go Away"? I think so. Almond inserts a long pause before its final verse, a jawdropping pastiche of gaiety masquerading as its plea pulls out the listener's heart. That night, Almond packed everything – fragility, anguish, the pain of a body which, in its animal strength, continues to survive – into a few lines. It was extraordinary. This squatly guy on stage had managed, by dint of what natural technical ability he owned, to move everything onto a new level. Almond seemed to draw the dark lights into himself, you forgot the group altogether. This was a performance that transcended his own talents and there was potent beauty in the song's interpretation. One should never sing the great torch songs lightly, the gut emotion they require is imperative to fakery.

That performance made sense in the way that I couldn't have anticipated. These were love songs about the absence of love, and they rippled *away* all that wilful deceit with which we like to clothe romance. Love conquers all? No, it doesn't. This is for ever. Even forever ends. It was nothing less than a wake-up call – that with an implicit message of survival attached.

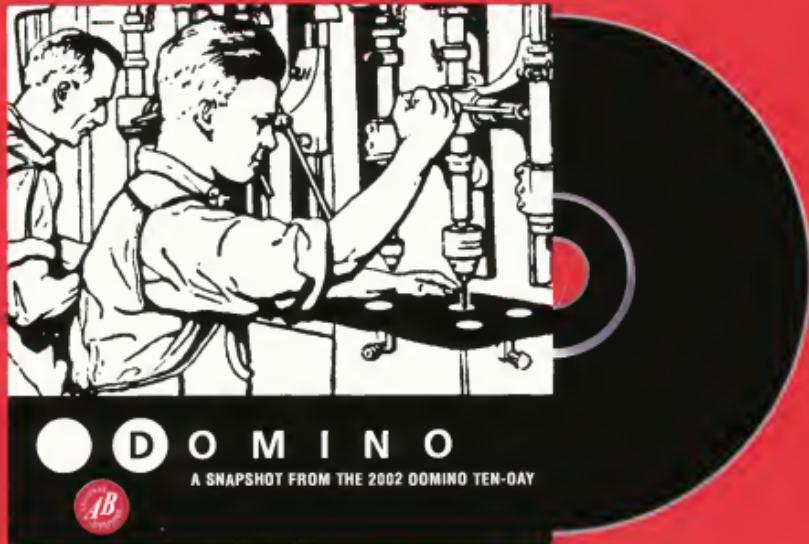
I've seen Almond several times since 1987, but that connection I felt the first time seemed to be missing. Maybe it was just me. I couldn't see. The Royal Albert Hall gigs in 1993 were fun, but too grandiose to affect me in any lasting way. His subsequent releases had great moments, although studio production could flatten the emotional content. I realised that with Almond, the imperfections are one of his greatest strengths and it's only on stage that you experience their transmogrification. When it occurs – and it's by no means a given – it's magical.

What I love about Almond's performances is that they can be tremendously flawed. Things go wrong. In December 2001, I got my second chance. At the last of two shows staged in the Gothic splendour of London's Union Chapel, a punter wanted to duet with Almond on "What Makes A Man A Man?"; the singer had a hirsute fit and then forgot his lines. An uneasiness rippled through the crowd. And then, from somewhere, it all came together. "I Created Me" – a simey, defiant declaration of the self-constructed man – presaged the show's denouement: a winking, tautly controlled version of Mother Hubbard's "Saint Judy". Anyone half-naked in the outfit, bathed in blue light, and a pugilistic electro-beat and singing a song about doomed divas, would make an arresting sight, but this was beyond mere staging. Almond's hymn was by turns, languid, loving, sleazy. The magnificent moment need only last a second – a sweeping line, a glance, a gesture – but when it comes, you can't fail to recognise it. It's powerful, shocking, wonderful. "Saint Judy" had the direction and the vision that its subject had lost. It dilated, stretching in a faux-narcotic phase, into snatches of other tunes – predictably "Somewhere Over The Rainbow", less predictably, "Kinky Afro" – before returning to form and the singer.

Almond should have ended after "Saint Judy", but give a queen a pupit and you know you're in for a long haul. The encores, conducted in a haze of sequins and greatest hits, well, it would be callous to deny him. Even if one phrase of one song changes the way you walk through the world, then movement, and by extension, life, has been affirmed.

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label showcases, indoor screenings and an exhibition of sleeve art culled from *The Wire's* 2001 Invisible London expo. To mark the festival, the organisers have compiled a special 14 track CD, featuring Uské Orchestra, Do Make Say Think, Styrofoam, Le Tigre, Anton Price, Cannibal Ox, King Tubby & Soul Syndicate, Stereotype & Scoffsayer, Fridge, Monguito, Eavesdropper, Timebold, Rudy Trouw and The Syncopated Elevators Legacy, which is given away to all *The Wire's* subscribers with this month's issue. For more details on the Domino festival, see this month's Out There section, or go to [www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)

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